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THE SELF-BETRAYED

by *Curt Riess*

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THE SELF-BETRAYED

# The Self-Betrayed

GLORY AND DOOM  
OF THE GERMAN GENERALS

*by Curt Riess*

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS, NEW YORK





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C. R.

Pacific Palisades, August, 1942.

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## MEET THE GENERALS

For three years now we have found their names almost daily in our newspapers. We have been reading about von Brauchitsch, von Reichenau, von Bock, von Leeb, von Rundstedt, von Kleist. We have read that they were commanding such-and-such an army or army group, that they were stationed in this or that area. We read that they were advancing into Poland, Belgium, Holland, France, the Balkans, Russia. We read that they had taken Lwow, Warsaw, Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris, Belgrade, Athens, Smolensk, Kharkov, Rostov.

They always seemed to be advancing. They forever seemed to be taking new cities and new countries. In their way they left destruction, death, disaster.

But, somehow, in spite of their activities in changing the map of Europe, they remain to us impersonal, indistinct, gray figures. They remain to us chessmen, never really alive. We do not think of them in terms of human relations. From time to time there have been rumors and little scandalous stories about their personal lives, about personal and very private difficulties they ran into—but even such stories gave nothing approaching a clear picture of what they are really like. Even such stories always showed them in their changing relation to Adolf Hitler, and the accent was always on Hitler, never on them. Looking at Germany, looking at Europe today, the figure of Hitler blots out all thought of anybody else, especially of the people around and behind him.

It is not by chance that we know so little about the German generals. It is so because they want it so, because they have wanted it so for generations. They are in the shadow because that's where they want to be. "To be more than to seem" was

their unwritten code, long before Count von Schlieffen formulated it as their motto.

They stand in the shadow, they are indistinct and gray figures, but we have every reason to try to throw some light on them and to study them more closely. We—the peoples in all the democratic countries, in a still free world. We—here in the United States.

Why should we do so? Because these men in the shadow are playing a decisive part in our lives and have played a decisive part long before we were conscious of it, and long before the war broke out, and long before we entered the war. We are in the habit of mentioning Adolf Hitler in this connection. But it isn't just Hitler. It is, even more, the men who put him in. The men who put him into power, who put him into the limelight, while they remained in the shadow. It is they who have filled the world for the last ten years—and, indeed, for generations before—with ever-growing fear. It is they who have made it impossible for the world to settle down for any length of time to peaceful work and to pursuit of happiness. It is they who, to a very large degree, formed the lives of our fathers and grandfathers, and our own lives, and it is they who are trying to form the lives of our children too.

Their influence lies not in general concepts like democracy or fascism or even nationalism. It strikes much deeper, into the individual and private life of each one of us, even though we are unaware of the very existence of these generals, of their names or of their deeds. It shows itself in little matters like sugar rationing and rubber salvage, and the necessity to dim out. And from there it has spread itself over this whole country, indeed over the whole free world, forcing it to gear itself to the sole purpose of producing weapons and armament. It reveals itself in sunken freighters and downed planes and bleeding and dying men, somewhere, everywhere in the world.

The German generals have to do very directly with our lives. They have a greater part in forming them, as a matter of fact, than we ourselves have today.

We hear occasionally of the sixty families that are supposed to rule the United States. We have heard of the notorious two hundred families of France. We have heard of the Cliveden set dividing the world over pleasant week ends. But we have never heard of the two hundred to three hundred families of *Ostelbien*.

*Ostelbien*—that is a part of Prussia that lies east of the Elbe River. A very distinctive part of Germany, and much different from any other part of the country. Its landscape has a frugal, severe, austere charm. Almost the entire land there is divided into large estates—enormously large estates for such a small country as Germany. And most of the estates are owned by some two hundred or three hundred families. Old nobility, of course, very old nobility. The von Kleists, von Wintersteins, von Buelows, von Wedels, von Bocks, etc. It is these families who have produced the German generals for many generations. And it is thus that these families of *Ostelbien*—who have also remained in the shadow—have throughout generations exercised a much greater influence than the sixty families of America, or the two hundred families of France, or the Cliveden set.

Influence on German affairs, influence on European affairs, influence on world affairs. Influence on your life and mine.

The men who came from these families, the clique of the German officers, the German generals, have always been very special generals. They differ in many ways from the generals of other countries.

They differ in their aims.

They don't care for or even want direct political power. They don't care about the victory or the defeat of an important idea, political or economic. They don't wage war for any very definite end, for any very definite purpose. They just want war.

They are different in their relationship to the State.

They do not consider themselves servants of the State. They do not fight for the preservation of the State, or any particular form of the State, or for any particular idea on which it may

be based. They consider themselves far more important than the State. Perhaps because through many generations they have seen so many different forms of government come and go.

They are different in their relationship to their own people.

They do not feel themselves the servants of the people. They do not feel that their task is to defend these people. They do not even like these people. They think that the people exist for the purpose of producing soldiers for an army which they will lead.

They are strange people, and their world is strange. It is a world in which peace is considered an intermezzo and war the normal state of affairs. It is a world in which life is considered cheap and death is considered the real goal of life. It is a world in which there is no room for pursuit of happiness and in which the pursuit of glory dominates everything else.

All this started more than one hundred and fifty years ago. In the latter half of the eighteenth century the French diplomat and writer, Count Mirabeau, said: "Prussia is not a state, it is an armed camp." Perhaps the men who originally helped to build up this camp, and who began to storm out of it to conquer more territory, may not have been responsible in the last analysis. They were simply following their king. Their first conquests stimulated their appetite for more conquests. The urge for more and more conquests blinded them to the existence of anything in the world but war and conquest. Somewhere along the way, however, they became guilty. At some point during the lifetime of every man, he can no longer claim that he was induced or was misled into committing certain acts. There comes a time when he must take the responsibility for his actions. Somewhere during the lifespan of every nation, or of the ruling class of a nation, that nation or that certain set within it can no longer claim to be too immature to understand. If it continues to commit frivolous or criminal acts it is guilty. And it must be judged guilty.

But there was the glory.

The glory and the prestige of infallibility acquired by the

generals ever since they started their work under Frederick the Great. Ever since they achieved their first *Blitzsieg* (lightning victory) in Frederick's first battle, because their soldiers were better trained and could shoot faster than the Austrians.

There were many such lightning wars and victories, first in the history of Prussia, then in the history of Germany. There were the wars of Frederick the Great. And after some defeats at the hands of Napoleon I, there was the defeat of the French emperor in which they played a decisive part. There was the lightning war against Denmark in 1864, against Austria in 1866, against France in 1871.

After that and up to 1914 the prestige of the Prussian—now German—Army and therefore of the generals was at its zenith.

Nevertheless, the fifth blitzkrieg failed. It failed in the very first weeks after it had started, in September, 1914. It was lost at the Marne. But neither the losing of the war—then, or officially and finally in 1918—nor the Treaty of Versailles was recognized by the German generals. They never even stopped, they went right on building their war machine, secretly at first, and cynically in the open later. For them, World War I did not end in 1918. Peace was only an interlude. Twenty-one years after the Armistice at Compiègne—and what are twenty-one years in history?—they took up where they had left off and started a new blitzkrieg. This time against Poland. And we read that they were advancing into Poland, into Belgium, Holland, France, the Balkans, Russia. We read that they had taken Lwow, Warsaw, Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris, Belgrade, Athens, Smolensk, Kharkov, Rostov....

In spite of some things that went wrong, in spite of certain reverses, the German generals were by the summer of 1942 at the height of their glory, of their fame, and in a position they had never reached before.

Still, something had changed. Something had changed very much during their march through a hundred and fifty years, during their march which started under Frederick the Great and now was coming to its culminating point under Hitler.

They were not the same as they had been. They were winning wars, but they were losing themselves.

They had brought Hitler into power. But the leader of a popular movement must destroy the caste of the generals and uproot them from the very soil on which they live. The ever-jealous, ever-fearful dictator must kill them bodily, whenever he becomes too fearful of their strength. The madman with his unrestricted ideas of world domination must drag them into a war which, because they will not win it, in the end will ruin them professionally.

They who called Hitler in, will die through Hitler.

But their tragedy did not begin when they called Hitler in. The very fact that they had to resort to Hitler proves that their inner decay had already progressed far. So in the last analysis there was nothing voluntary about their calling Hitler in. It was the last attempt of dying men, of a dying caste, to prolong its forfeited life. And ironically enough, in the grandiose prospective of the Greek tragedy, by trying to prolong it they hastened its end.

It matters little when this tragedy of the decline of the German generals really began. It matters little that the curtain has not yet rung down. For the last scene is just about to end. It was written long ago. Nothing can change the outcome, nothing can change the fate of the German generals.

This book is the story of the tragedy's last act.

Place: Berlin. Time: January, 1938.

■

PART I

*PROLOGUE TO THE  
LAST ACT*

■





## I

ON JANUARY 11, 1938, Werner Eduard Fritz von Blomberg, Field Marshal and War Minister of the Third Reich, married Fräulein Erika Gruhn. Herr von Blomberg was fifty-nine years old and the father of four grown children. His bride was twenty-eight years old.

The marriage was kept a close secret. Not until the following day did the Propaganda Ministry permit the German press to report it. There were a few pictures, showing gray-haired Herr von Blomberg and his young bride descending the steps of the gray stone building on the Kaiserin Augusta Ufer, next to the Reichswehr Ministry.

Erika Gruhn was rather good-looking. She was tall—just half a head shorter than the groom—she was blond, she had blue eyes which you couldn't tell were blue in the pictures, and she carried herself very well. She looked very much as you would suppose the bride of Herr von Blomberg would look.

There were newsreels, too, showing the bride and the groom leaving the house, but they did not show the ceremony which had taken place in the reception hall of von Blomberg's apartment. There was a very good reason for that, because the ceremony had been simple and intimate, perhaps too intimate. There was not a single general of the German Army present. Not even the Chief of the Reichswehr, General Werner von Fritsch, though he was living in the same building.

The wedding pictures were withdrawn from all newsreels after having been shown for only two days, on the order of the Propaganda Ministry. No reason was given.

The witnesses at the wedding were Adolf Hitler, the Com-

mander in Chief of the Armed Forces of Germany, and Hermann Goering, the Commander in Chief of the German Air Force.

This was not the first time that Adolf Hitler had taken the role of witness at a wedding. Even before he came to power he had done the same for Goebbels, and a few years afterward for Goering. Still, Goering and Goebbels were old friends, or at least old comrades in the struggle for power. It was rather strange that he should pay Blomberg the honor of being a witness at his wedding, and it was a clear indication of his appreciation of his War Minister.

Hitler had good reason to appreciate him.

Werner von Blomberg was by no means one of the old guard fighters of the Nazi Party. He was an old soldier, and until World War I was over he had scarcely ever concerned himself seriously with politics. He came from a family of soldiers—and generals—and was interested in little else. Born in 1878, he had been educated in cadet schools, had had a career typical of that of many officers, and had entered World War I as a member of the General Staff. After Versailles he was one of the most important forces backstage, helping to build up the new German Army. From 1932 on, he was stationed in Geneva with the German Legation at the Disarmament Conference. He did some valuable work there—valuable, that is, from the German point of view.

He was not the kind of man whose personality impresses one at once. Tall and slender, with a firm military bearing, grave of temper and a strict disciplinarian, but frank and good-natured in the company of those few officers who were his friends, he seemed little different from dozens of other high German officers.

Yet he was different.

He was one of the few top-ranking officers, one of the few Prussian Junkers, who had found his way to Hitler comparatively early. He had confidence in the adventurous politician who was considered socially unacceptable by most of Blomberg's

colleagues. He had so much confidence in Hitler that from 1931 on he did his best to convince his friends that Hitler was worth a try.

In the months before Hitler actually took over, these efforts were redoubled, and nobody knew better than the Fuehrer himself that in the final analysis Blomberg was largely responsible for his coming to power. Therefore he was delighted when Blomberg was suggested to him for the post of War Minister. In the first place, Blomberg was a good man, a hard and persistent worker, a man who got things done. But he was also one who could easily be led and therefore was just the man for the self-willed Hitler. He was the man who, wittingly or unwittingly, would carry out the tasks Hitler wanted done.

The absence of other top-ranking German officers at the War Minister's wedding is easy to account for. They had not been invited. Herr von Blomberg wanted "a completely intimate ceremony." He wanted this for a reason his colleagues did not yet know, though they suspected. Fräulein Gruhn—who in the world was Fräulein Gruhn? Herr von Blomberg, descendant of the famous Alexander von Blomberg who fell in 1813 during the "War of Liberation," son of Lieutenant Colonel Emil von Blomberg and Emma von Tschepe, whose ancestry was highly distinguished—this Herr von Blomberg marrying a Fräulein Gruhn! And then, of course, there was the discrepancy in age between bride and bridegroom. For the German officers, all this was reason enough for them to remain aloof. They were not only reserved. They were irritated.

There was something in the air. But no one knew exactly what it was.

On the eve of the wedding, the Minister for Propaganda and Public Enlightenment, Joseph Goebbels, had given a dinner for the foreign press in order to inform them of the impending wedding. Some fifty representatives of the foreign press were invited. These correspondents were surprised to find that Goebbels himself had not thought it necessary to attend. Instead he had sent his representative, Herr Funk. They were also sur-

prised to note that only second-raters among the Nazi dignitaries came to the dinner.

When they asked for details about the bride, they were answered by deprecating shrugs. It seemed that the German Propaganda Ministry, always so well informed, had no idea who this Fräulein Gruhn actually was.

But Goebbels did know who she was. That was why he had preferred to absent himself from the dinner he had arranged.

By now Adolf Hitler knew, too.

The afternoon after the wedding he had received the tall, bland-looking Chief of the SS, Heinrich Himmler. Himmler took from his briefcase a bundle of papers and handed them to his Fuehrer, explaining that they concerned a matter of the utmost importance. Hitler read through the papers carefully, and then he had one of those notorious fits of rage which his closest associates always talk about with terror for weeks afterward. In the course of this outbreak—according to witnesses—he didn't treat Heinrich Himmler gently. Why, he demanded, hadn't Himmler shown him the papers earlier? Why did he come to him with them now, now that it was too late?

Himmler did not lose his composure. He insisted that the papers had come into his possession only a few hours ago. Perhaps Hitler believed him, perhaps he did not. In any case, as he had said, it was too late to do anything.

The papers that had thrown him into a fit of rage concerned Erika Gruhn.

Division RW of the Gestapo, which since February, 1934, had been engaged in close investigations of the private lives of all German generals and other high officers, had long known that Herr von Blomberg was associated with a young woman whom he at first called his stenographer and later his private secretary. But—if we are to believe Himmler's declaration—the Gestapo did not know that another authority had a detailed dossier on Erika Gruhn. This other authority was the Berlin vice squad. Erika Gruhn was a prostitute.

Her mother, who was separated from her husband, called

herself a masseuse. In reality she ran a house of prostitution in Berlin's newspaper quarter. In this part of town her daughter, Erika, was one of the main attractions. At certain hours of the night she could be seen sitting in the Café Mokka Efti, on Leipzigerstrasse at the corner of Friedrichstrasse. Here she met men whom she later brought to her mother's house.

Immediately after the wedding, Herr von Blomberg left Berlin for his honeymoon. It is said—though this cannot be established with certainty—that the horrified Fuehrer sent his private plane to fetch von Blomberg from Leipzig on his wedding night. Hitler is supposed to have pleaded with him to let the marriage be annulled. But Herr von Blomberg is said to have replied that it was out of the question, that he didn't believe the slander, that he loved his wife and would stick by her.

In any case, Blomberg traveled from Leipzig to Italy, and spent his honeymoon on Capri. The story about Hitler's final plea seems rather dubious. For the Fuehrer must have known that even if the marriage were annulled, he could not keep Blomberg as War Minister. The scandal had already been brewed. A German War Minister, a man from one of the oldest and noblest Prussian families, simply could not marry a prostitute. Hitler knew his own generals well enough to realize that.

Five days after the wedding, von Blomberg's aged mother died. It was whispered that the shock had hastened her end. The officers, who had ignored the War Minister's wedding, now sent their condolences. Even the Commander in Chief of the German Army, Freiherr Werner von Fritsch, sent a telegram of condolence.

Then he took action.

## 2

By this time Herr von Fritsch, too, had seen the dossier on Erika Gruhn.

Hitler had not sent it to him. Nor had Himmler—not offi-

cially, at any rate. As a matter of fact, Erika Gruhn's dossier had been sent anonymously to Herr von Fritsch. And a copy had been forwarded to old Field Marshal von Mackensen, the senior officer of the German Army.

These gentlemen had suspected something. Ursula von Blomberg, the War Minister's eldest daughter, had left her father's house shortly before his marriage. As far as the other officers could see, her quarrel with her father must be due to his marriage.

But the story they read in the anonymous dossier exceeded their worst fears. Masseur...brothel...prostitute.... It was so horrible that at first the officers could not believe it. They decided to investigate on their own. And since Herr von Blomberg was one of their own class, since it was their duty to protect his reputation even if unbelievable charges proved true, the generals did not call in one of the dozens of official police agencies. They decided to do their own detective work.

It was not easy and it took time. But by Thursday, January 27, Herr von Fritsch had learned that the dossier on Erika Gruhn was the truth and nothing but the truth. And he resolved not to waste another minute.

That same afternoon he sent a telautograph message from the War Ministry. His message was an urgent order to all commanders of military districts in the Reich to proceed to Berlin that same night for important conferences which would be held on Friday and Saturday. On Thursday evening he had a talk with General Ludwig Beck, Chief of the General Staff, and General von Witzleben, Commander of the Berlin Military District. He explained to them what he intended to do and requested their backing. The two generals assured him they would stand behind him.

Herr von Fritsch was entering upon the decisive battle of his life. He knew he was playing for a high stake, although he did not yet know how high it actually was. But the tall, blond, blue-eyed man showed no sign of excitement. Herr von Fritsch always had a perfect poker face. He never removed his monocle

from his right eye and, needless to say, it never fell out of its own accord. Von Fritsch was the perfect prototype of the strong, silent soldier. In conversation he got along on yes and no. He was an inflexibly strict disciplinarian both on and off duty. He saw everything. At this time he was fifty-eight years old, but his trained iron-muscle body did not betray his age.

His face gave evidence of above-average intelligence—at least above the average of the Prussian officers—and an ironic view of life that verged on cynicism. But if Herr von Fritsch held derogatory views on the worth of the human race in general and the members of it who were his closest associates in particular, he kept those views to himself. In the company of others he never revealed that he didn't take certain things seriously. On the contrary, he seemed to take everything too seriously. He never smiled.

Indeed, during these last days of January, 1938, he had less reason than ever to smile.

The generals met on Friday morning. At ten o'clock the meeting opened in the Conference Room of the German War Ministry. Herr von Fritsch presided. In addition to him and to Chief of Staff Beck—Herr von Witzleben was unable to attend—the following generals were present:

- General von Rundstedt of the Berlin Army Group.
- General Ritter von Leeb of the Kassel Army Group.
- General von Bock of the Dresden Army Group.
- General von Brauchitsch of the Leipzig Army Group.
- General von Kuechler, First Military District, Königsberg.
- General Blaskowitz, Second Military District, Stettin.
- General List, Fourth Military District, Dresden.
- General Geyer, Fifth Military District, Stuttgart.
- General von Kluge, Sixth Military District, Münster.
- General von Reichenau, Seventh Military District, Munich.
- General von Kleist, Eighth Military District, Breslau.
- General Dollmann, Ninth Military District, Kassel.
- General Knochenhauer, Tenth Military District, Hamburg.
- General Ulex, Eleventh Military District, Hanover.



General Kress von Kressenstein, Twelfth Military District, Wiesbaden.

General von Weichs, Thirteenth Military District, Nuremberg.

General Lutz, Berlin panzer corps.

When all the men had entered the room, the tall white-painted doors were closed. Not even Cavalry Captain Mangelsdorf, Chief of the Guard, or Colonel Kuntzen, von Fritsch's aide, were allowed to be present at the meeting. Neither stenographers nor secretaries were allowed. The same should have held true for Major Alfred Jodl who had acted as receptionist. However, he must have found a way to get in on at least part of the meeting.

The generals did not learn about that till later. At the time they had reason to believe that no word of theirs uttered during the meeting would go beyond the room. Later, of course, almost every one of them talked. In fact, the meeting was to be one of the most discussed in the military history of the Third Reich.

There they sat.

Somehow they looked strangely alike. Elderly men who did not allow themselves to relax, but sat stiffly, even around a conference table. Tall and broad-shouldered most of them. Their faces were masks never betraying what they really thought, let alone what they really felt. Most of them wore monocles. Looking at them you would have thought that you could never tell them apart if you met them again.

Herr von Fritsch briefly informed his guests of the facts about Erika Gruhn. Masseuse...house of ill fame...prostitute.... The generals stared at him wide-eyed. They said little—what was there to say about such a case? And Herr von Fritsch gave them little time for comments. He had not called his generals together to gossip. He had plans, important plans.

He hoped now that he could carry out a plan he had been nursing for years—a plan he hoped and believed most of his generals desired. The time seemed favorable. Hitler, as wit-

ness at the marriage of a prostitute, was scarcely in a position to deny a request from his generals. Von Fritsch intended to grasp the opportunity. Now, at last, he could get rid of Blomberg.

The War Minister's *mésalliance* with Erika Gruhn was only a pretext—the spark, so to speak, that set off the explosion. The real reason lay deeper. The real reason was not the War Minister's wife but the War Minister himself.

If von Fritsch had been other than the taciturn man he was, he might have explained at length that Herr von Blomberg was a traitor to his caste. This was what it amounted to. After all, the Army had not only accepted von Blomberg; it had suggested him originally. To be sure it had done so because he stood in well with the Nazis. But the main thing was that Blomberg, though he was on good terms with the Nazis, "belonged" to the caste, and could be expected to act in its interests. However, since he had begun to work with Hitler, he had come more and more under the influence of the Fuehrer and the Nazis. Fritsch accused Blomberg, at the conference and at other times, of having become too soft. This, as a matter of fact, was the opinion of all the generals. In private they had given their War Minister the unflattering nickname of "our weakling." That was all very well until it began to affect the structure of the Army, and especially the structure of the officers' corps. Blomberg had not lived up to his comrades' expectations; he had not succeeded in keeping Nazis out of commanding positions in the Army. On the contrary, he had actually made possible their penetration into high places in the Army during the last few years. As long as Blomberg was War Minister, Fritsch concluded, this situation would not change. Therefore Blomberg must go.

Fritsch wanted to eliminate the influence of the Party and the Party members in the Army. This was his aim. In particular he was worried about the Air Force and the tank corps.

The struggle for the Luftwaffe was a struggle between Goering and Fritsch. It had been raging behind the scenes with undiminished intensity since 1935. Fritsch saw no reason why

the Luftwaffe should be organized and led as a unit separate from the Army. For many reasons, most of them exclusively military, he considered that wholly wrong. Hitler and Goering, on the other hand, wanted to retain control of the Air Force. That is, they wanted to keep it in the hands of the Party. It was evident that Hitler wanted this for political rather than for military reasons; the Luftwaffe was a powerful weapon in his hands. One could never know—

Fritsch had accepted the situation when Goering was entrusted with the task of building up the Air Force. He had taken it with fairly good grace because he succeeded in placing one of his men, Lieutenant General Wever, in a key position within the Luftwaffe. But Wever had crashed in 1936, and the Army was in danger of losing all influence in the Air Force.

Blomberg was not the man to oppose Goering. In fact, Blomberg was utterly subservient to the fat, be-medaled Nazi. Fritsch was well acquainted with the amusing story about the American photographer going from room to room to photograph him in different settings. And each time Blomberg had dragged along a big picture of Goering and placed it so that it would show in the photograph. "That will please the old fellow," the War Minister had kept mumbling.

Fritsch and many of his generals had the same point of view about the Luftwaffe. They wanted a conservative command; they wanted everything departmentalized in the old, traditional way. Fritsch's attitude toward the tank forces was exactly the same as toward the Luftwaffe. Herr von Fritsch had a deep-rooted distrust of all these newfangled weapons. He was stubbornly unwilling to recognize their importance. His struggle against the tank forces was another conflict that had raged behind the scenes for years. And this conflict, too, Fritsch had lost up to now. In the tank conflict his opponent was a certain Heinz Guderian, a man who was not only of middle-class birth but an Armenian to boot.

Guderian had begun his fight for a tank army and for what he called his "panzer strategy" in 1929. At that time he was a

captain in the Army of the Republic. Guderian proposed to set up a tank army as an independent unit which would sweep out in the van of the regular army. He conceived of his tanks somewhat as mechanized Uhlans. This theory brought down on his head violent opposition from all the conservative generals in Germany.

Guderian supported his views by citing three foreign authorities: the British General, G. F. C. Fuller; the French Colonel, Charles de Gaulle; and the Austrian General, Ritter von Eimansberger—three military theorists of indubitable brilliance.

These questions did not stir up open quarrels, of course, until after Hitler was in power; that is, not till 1933. Then General Ritter von Eimansberger came from Austria and took a personal hand in the dispute.

For Fritsch, everything depended on the question: Cavalry or tanks? Cavalry was the feudal weapon. Cavalry rode in front of the infantry, but remained in contact. Tanks broke free. Tanks meant that individual initiative would be given more leeway. Consequently, the principle of a unitary high command could no longer be maintained.

In the final analysis, this struggle had exactly the same meaning as the struggle over the Air Force. It was a conflict between conservative and revolutionary methods of warfare. Fritsch and his predecessors had done all they could to make impossible the establishment of tank units within the Army. For them the armed forces consisted of the Army and the Navy. Fighting on land or in the air above land was the province of the Army; fighting on water or in the air above the water was the province of the Navy.

Then, too, Fritsch distrusted tanks themselves, as such. He called them "coffins on wheels." Moreover, he and all the other conservative generals despised technical weapons per se. They disliked new inventions, inventions that were made and run by middle-class people. These generals, who were the grandsons and great-grandsons of generals, had never quite freed themselves from the romantic conception of the equestrian lancer.

For Guderian, tanks were simply modern cavalry. In explaining how he intended to employ tanks, he used as illustrations the famous battles in which Napoleon, with light and heavy cavalry, had achieved smashing break-throughs. Guderian said that he could achieve the same results with light and heavy tanks respectively. Light tanks to sweep forward in the van of the troops; heavy tanks to support the troops.

For the time being, at any rate, Guderian's ideas had triumphed. Even before Hitler's rise to power, the Infantry School of Breslau had been turned into a Tank School, in order to give Guderian an opportunity to experiment.

Fritsch viewed all this with distrust and resentment. And many of his colleagues shared his views. But not all.

There was unanimity, however, on a number of other points which were also discussed in the course of the generals' conference. The generals wanted to withdraw themselves and the German Army from all participation in the Spanish adventure—and they wanted this done at once. They welcomed Fritsch's suggestion to demand that Hitler stop all further aid to Franco. They were afraid that relations with France would deteriorate even further if German intervention in Spain continued. The generals felt that pacific relations with France were important, and they felt that friendship with Italy was unimportant, for they didn't think Italian military strength was even worth discussion. Only a few weeks before, Italy had joined the Berlin-Tokyo Anti-Comintern Pact, and the generals agreed unanimously that it was better not to talk about the military value of the pact.

Also discussed was the pagan propaganda that Alfred Rosenberg and his agents were carrying on within the Army. For many reasons the generals hated, or at least disliked, these activities. They certainly didn't want Party men coming into the soldiers' barracks—something they had been doing of late.

There sat the generals. They sat stiffly in their chairs, not moving, hardly even turning their heads. Their faces did not betray what they thought or felt. Their monocles gleamed.

Their voices sounded monotonous, each word had just as much accent as the one before or after, each word came out in a sort of staccato, each conveyed the speaker's idea that, really, it was hardly worth speaking at all.

No definite resolutions were arrived at, and no vote was taken. Fritsch did not want to force a vote. He had counted on getting the suggestion from the floor—if no one else did it, he was sure General von Brauchitsch would call for a vote. But during the entire meeting General von Brauchitsch had not opened his mouth.

As a rule, General Brauchitsch was not a man to sit silently. Unlike most of the other generals, this big, powerful man with the striking, handsome face, was socially talented. He liked to laugh, to chat, to make speeches, and he liked particularly to hear himself talk. He was a favorite with the ladies, but nevertheless was well liked by his colleagues. They knew he was ambitious, but so were they all. They didn't consider him particularly intelligent—and he probably was not—but that was something in his favor, since it meant that he was not dangerous. This latter conclusion, as events were to prove, was a mistake.

Herr von Fritsch had his reasons for counting on Brauchitsch. Herr von Brauchitsch, who in 1933 became Chief of the East Prussian Military District in Königsberg, had not got along very well with the Nazis. For a time there had even been whispers of "conspiracy." The truth was, Brauchitsch was connected with conservative Catholics and old Social Democrats who kept up relations with him because they hoped the General might undertake a military putsch against Hitler.

Another difficulty was that Brauchitsch could not get along with the Nazi President of East Prussia, Herr Koch, a swindler and a gangster. In 1935 things came to a head between Brauchitsch and the SS. Again there were whispers of a revolt. Hitler went to Königsberg to intervene personally and a scandal was averted. But still these events had not contributed to make

Brauchitsch an enthusiastic Nazi. At any rate, so thought Herr von Fritsch.

Late in the afternoon the two senior generals, Kress von Kressenstein and Gerd von Rundstedt, came to Fritsch's aid. They moved that the meeting charge Herr von Fritsch to go to Hitler and demand first, Blomberg's recall; second, the settlement of the Spanish issue; and third, the outlawing of pagan propaganda in the barracks.

Next morning, Saturday, January 29, Fritsch telephoned the Chancellory to ask for an interview with Hitler. He was told to come that same afternoon.

### 3

Hitler did not have to wait for Fritsch's arrival to find out what had taken place in the War Ministry the day before. He already knew something of what had happened. He knew who had been present at the meeting and had a report on at least large sections of the conversation. For one of Fritsch's closest associates had decided to play the Judas.

This man was Major Alfred Jodl. On the morning of the 29th Jodl went to Hitler and delivered his report. This was the beginning of one of the most remarkable military careers in modern history.

Jodl, a solidly built, middle-aged man whose hair was fast disappearing, with a hard, sharp face dominated by unusually penetrating eyes, had known Hitler since 1923. He had been introduced to him by Ernst Roehm. At that time, however, Jodl had decided not to join the small Nazi Party with its dubious chances for success. He thought, quite justifiably, that joining the Party might well injure his chances for personal success. However, his career during the following years had not been particularly brilliant. His colleagues and superiors did not like him because his fanatic ambition got on their nerves. He had had the good fortune to link up with Fritsch, who was one of the leading experts on artillery practice and who taught the

young artillery officer a great deal. But that was not enough to keep Major Jodl from betraying Fritsch when the opportunity presented itself.

At about four in the afternoon Fritsch drove to the Vossstrasse. He was received by Colonel Hessebach, *Obergruppenfuehrer* (Higher Group Leader) Wilhelm Brueckner, and SS *Obergruppenfuehrer* Joseph Schaub. He had to wait for a few minutes in the anteroom. Finally the door opened and Heinrich Himmler came out of Hitler's office. Later events give us reason to believe that this meeting was staged. Hitler wanted Fritsch to know that he had seen Himmler just before him, Fritsch. However, if he hoped to make Fritsch nervous, he was disappointed. The Commander in Chief of the German Army was not easily unnerved.

Hitler received Herr von Fritsch in his study—that enormous room whose tall windows look out over the park and which is furnished only with Hitler's sprawling desk, a picture of Bismarck, a huge globe of the world, and some chairs—an imitation of Mussolini's theatrical working room.

There are no reliable reports on the exact content of the conversation between Hitler and Fritsch. All we know definitely is that it was brief. The two were together no more than three-quarters of an hour. From this we may judge that Fritsch himself was brief and to the point. Probably he did not so much talk as make demands. It is likely that he did not make suggestions, but posed an ultimatum.

This was just what Hitler was prepared for.

We do not know, and probably never will know, just what Hitler said to Fritsch that afternoon. But we do know how he felt toward the general, what his attitude toward him had been for years.

Hitler hated Herr von Fritsch.

There were many reasons for this hatred. Herr von Fritsch was proud and haughty with people, and he made no exception of Adolf Hitler. In private he always referred to the Fuehrer as "the corporal." It would have been miraculous if these things



had not come to Hitler's ears. Even if Major Jodl had not delivered his frequent reports....

If it had been up to Hitler, Fritsch would never have become Commander in Chief of the Army. In 1934, when Commander in Chief Kurt von Hammerstein-Equord retired, Hitler had had other plans. But at that time old Hindenburg was still alive, and he had insisted on Fritsch's appointment—a perfectly logical step from the military point of view.

Hitler's hatred for Fritsch actually dated from 1932. At that time the Nazi Party had already established a kind of unofficial War Ministry, the so-called *Wehrpolitische Amt* (Military Political Bureau of the Nazi Party), under General von Epp. This bureau worked like a General Staff, devising war plans and working out the details. In 1932 Hitler asked for an audience with Hindenburg. The Nazi leader very importantly brought with him certain plans that had been concocted in his *Wehrpolitische Amt*. Undoubtedly he thought to impress the old President by showing him that his Party was patriotic and militant. With a grand gesture he declared to Hindenburg that he intended "to make this a gift to the German people." Hindenburg took the plans and snarled at Hitler that he and his Party had no business concerning themselves with such matters. Nevertheless, he had the plans examined. The man he gave them to was Fritsch. Fritsch's critique was merciless. He declared that Hitler and his crew were a pack of ridiculous dilettantes. Hitler found this out and never forgave him for it.

The problem of German participation in the Spanish Civil War intensified Hitler's hatred of Fritsch. Fritsch was flatly against all aid to Franco. To save his political face, Hitler had to aid Franco. The antagonism between Hitler and Fritsch was so tense at times that there were whispers of revolt. Those in the know declared that early in 1937 Hitler "barricaded" himself in the Chancellory and that Fritsch had himself and his Ministry "guarded" by heavily armed soldiers. The only truth in all these rumors is that Hitler had had another

of his fits of rage over the difficulties his Commanding General was creating for him.

Although we don't know what Hitler said to Fritsch that Saturday afternoon, in January, 1938, we do know what the Fuehrer's basic attitude was toward all the matters that could have come up for discussion.

Hitler knew that Fritsch wanted to get rid of Blomberg in order to halt or eliminate entirely the rising influence of Nazi officers. He knew also that he would not be able to keep Blomberg. As a matter of fact, he had no intention of keeping him. Perhaps he was not altogether displeased that he had to let Blomberg go now.

For Hitler had definite plans of his own. He wanted to simplify the entire organization of the armed forces. This was not his own idea; he had taken it from two staff colonels named Mueller-Loebnitz and Warlimont who had handed him a memorandum only a short time before. This memorandum proposed a thoroughgoing reorganization of the armed forces, along American lines. The chief of the State was also to be the Commander in Chief. To be sure, Hitler was Commander in Chief already. But so far only in name. This kind of reform suited Hitler exactly. It meant that he would become head of the whole German Armed Forces and therefore, of course, the superior of the Commander in Chief of the Army.

For these plans Hitler needed a more energetic man than Blomberg, a man who would be much more his own man than Blomberg had ever been or ever could be. Hitler reasoned that once he was head of the entire armed forces he would be able to accomplish what Fritsch was trying to prevent: to place Nazis in all influential positions in the Army. This was more important for the Army, he felt, than for any other branch. If Fritsch knuckled under, there was no reason why he should not remain. This was the view of Hitler's closest associates. If he were not content to work under Hitler, alongside the head of the Navy and the head of the Air Force, then he would have to go.

Fritsch was diametrically opposed to this point of view. Instead of incorporating the Air Force into the Army, as he had hoped, he saw the entire organization in danger of disastrous dissolution. Above all, he saw the threat of Nazi influence in all the armed forces looming larger and larger. The only possible assumption is that he met all Hitler's proposals with a curt no.

At this time, in Berlin, throughout Germany, and in all Europe, the most incomprehensible rumors began to circulate. It was said that Hitler was a prisoner of the Army. That Hitler had flown into a rage and had dismissed a number of Army officers because on January 27 the generals had sent congratulations to the ex-Kaiser on his birthday. The case of Erika Gruhn came to light with a number of new variations. There were other rumors of the planned Reichstag speech—contents unknown—which the generals had forced Hitler to toss into the wastepaper basket. Finally, there was talk of a new blood purge. There were conflicting views on who would kill whom or who had already been killed.

There was not a grain of truth in all these rumors. What happened was that on February 2, Heinrich Himmler telephoned General von Fritsch and informed him that on orders of the Fuehrer he would have to be taken into protective custody. Fritsch protested. The other generals, who were still in Berlin, protested. And Hitler finally intervened, declaring that there was no intention to arrest Fritsch but for the time being he must give his word not to leave his residence on the Kaiserin Augusta Ufer.

The odd circumstance that the Commander in Chief of the German Army was confined to his rooms was to have an unpleasant sequel.

#### 4

While all this excitement was taking place in Berlin, the rest of the world did not present a very satisfactory picture of peace and international co-operation. Toward the end of Janu-

ary, 1938, the world was a monstrous chaos, a fearful compound of misunderstandings, conspiracies, and an unbelievable amount of wishful thinking.

Two wars were raging: the Sino-Japanese War and the Spanish Civil War.

The Sino-Japanese War by now was six months old. And those six months had already shown that while the Japanese could achieve a number of scattered military successes, the war would be a long-drawn-out one. Chiang Kai-shek already had Chinese resistance well organized; the scorched earth policy had achieved its first successes; for the present, at least, the Japanese had gained no practical advantages from their conquests, and the puppet regimes they had set up did not work.

It was about this time that the United States awoke to the fact that a one-ocean fleet was insufficient. Roosevelt proposed a new navy program that provided for a seventy-five per cent increase in naval warcraft. The Senate approved the first appropriation, which provided funds for seventy-two ships, including two battleships, eight destroyers, and six submarines.

France was already far down the one-way street that was to lead to Munich. Her position as a Great Power, in Europe at any rate, was based principally on her superiority in the Balkans, her military security, and on a table of alliances and treaties. By now the whole system was obviously beginning to totter. Germany had undermined France's strength in the Balkans by barter purchases of surplus farm produce. Yugoslavia was already largely dependent on Germany. Rumania, weakened by internal conflicts that bordered on civil war, tried in vain to restore balance by semi-fascist and fascist experiments in government. But here, too, it was only a question of time before she became wholly dependent upon Germany. Bulgaria was wholly undermined; the King was a puppet in the hands of Hitler. For the present, the Franco-Polish alliance had been destroyed.

Moreover, France was encountering a permanent internal crisis whose proportions grew constantly. The experiment of Blum had not satisfied the masses, but it had sufficed to enrage

the reactionaries to the point where they now declared openly that they preferred Hitler to Leon Blum. By the end of 1937, Blum had fallen. Camille Chautemps, a politician with an ambiguous past and, as events were to prove, an ambiguous future, could not master the difficulties he found when he took office as premier. In the middle of January, 1938, he too fell, and a little later a second Blum cabinet was formed. And then came Daladier. Daladier represented many things, among them a complete inability to recognize the menace of Hitler and an unwillingness to maintain the alliance with Russia.

The statesmen of Great Britain, especially the men around Chamberlain, were disturbed by both the Spanish Civil War and the Sino-Japanese War. But they did not see where the real danger lay, and they did not recognize the extent of the danger. Hitler increased their discomfiture by moving closer and closer to Italy and stirring up trouble in the Arab world, which had the advantage of improving Turko-German relations. The Germans cleverly incited unrest and riots in the Near East, especially in Palestine. Chamberlain had no idea what it was all about and tried to appease the Arabs. He came out with the ridiculous suggestion to split up Palestine, which enraged both Jews and Arabs. In February, 1938, Chamberlain had sent a second commission to Palestine.

Only a few men in England recognized the storm signals, and these men were powerless. In February, 1938, Eden was forced out and was replaced by Lord Halifax, who stood on excellent terms with Hitler. But the critics of the Chamberlain policy could no longer be silenced completely. The cry for Churchill mounted in intensity. The failure of the air rearmament program under Air Minister Viscount Swinton, largely due to the vacillating Lord Londonderry, could no longer be concealed from the public.

Holland and Belgium slumbered peacefully, and on February 6, 1938, Holland celebrated the birth of Princess Beatrix. In the United States those who warned against Hitler were called warmongers, and even the excellently informed *New*

*York Times* went astray. On January 30, 1938, the *Times*, in articles on Hitler's fifth anniversary as Chancellor of Germany, summed up the situation in the words: "Germany remade by Hitler [is] more ready for compromise."

At this time, and especially after the conquest of Teruel, the Civil War in Spain seemed to be going much better for the Republicans. Democratic-minded people throughout the world began to breathe more easily about Spain, and those who looked beyond the issue of the moment thought there was some hope for Europe. But only a few months later it became apparent that Franco's victory was only a question of time.

The French General Staff was for intervention in the Spanish Civil War; the German General Staff was against intervention. The French were right—for France. The Germans were wrong—for Germany. It is a tragedy of world history that neither the French General Staff, with its correct view, nor the German Staff, with its wrong view, was able to prevail.

The French generals wanted to support the Loyalists. They saw clearly that it would be better, in case of a war with Germany and Italy, to have a democratic Spain at their rear rather than a fascist enemy. Some of the French generals even realized that a defeat of fascism in Spain would weaken the fighting strength of Italy for years. Probably, too, it would weaken Hitler's prestige and thereby weaken the fighting strength of Germany. But the French and British statesmen were too stupid or too dishonest to allow the French generals to act upon their clear insight.

The German generals, from Fritsch down, took the somewhat strange view that Spain did not concern them. They declared it was wrong to wage wars which had no "national" aims. However, it is not surprising that the German generals were so lacking in political insight; that they failed completely to recognize the political implications which Hitler had long since perceived. What was surprising was that they were so lacking in military insight. They did not realize what Hitler understood: that the Spanish war was a golden opportunity to

try out new methods; that it could be a dress rehearsal or, in the military phrase, a maneuver for a coming European war.

Hitler refused to be misled.

Against his generals' will, over Fritsch's furious protest, he sent "volunteers" to Spain. He gave the German Air Force an opportunity to find out how civilian populations behaved under air bombing; to learn how to profit by panic-jammed roads during a bombing. He gave them a chance to study co-operation between ground forces and air forces. And incidentally he learned things that were none too pleasant but were necessary lessons. He learned what his generals had always predicted: that his military apparatus was still inefficient from top to bottom.

In the case of Spain, Hitler was more farsighted than his generals—even though Franco's victory gained the Germans nothing and cost them a lot of money.

The whole world was chaotic; there were countless misunderstandings and too much wishful thinking. And the fate of many millions of innocent people, who wanted no more than a peaceful, industrious life, was sealed at a time when only a handful of people suspected what was happening.

But throughout the world, things were not going too well with generals.

In Russia, just half a year previously—in July, 1937—Generals R. P. Eideman, Tukhashevsky, Yakir, Levandowski, Uborevitch, and Kork had been executed, and Marshal I. B. Gamarnik, Vice Commissar for Defense, had committed suicide. Stalin had had reason to believe that a large number of Russian generals had betrayed the ideals of Communism and were about to set up a military dictatorship. He struck, and struck faster than the generals.

In June, 1938, a purge of generals took place even in England. The purge did not spill blood, but it was scarcely less radical.

Outwardly the cause seemed to be the appointment of Leslie Hore-Belisha as Secretary of State for War. But behind the

appointment, behind the purge following the appointment, there were deeper reasons. Even Chamberlain and the men around him felt that some things could not go on if the British Army was not to be relegated to the pages of *Punch* as a butt of ridicule. The old officers did not want to hear about tanks at all. They did not want to hear anything about mechanized weapons, largely because many of them felt that the introduction of tanks would mean the end of polo, of which they were very fond. There was also the slight matter of feeding the Army. According to official secret reports at that time, there had been "not enough of anything except hot water."

The chief victims of the purge were Field Marshal Sir Cyril J. Deverell, Chief of the Imperial General Staff; Major General R. H. Haining, Director of Military Operations and Intelligence; General Sir Harry S. H. Knox, Adjutant General to the Forces; Lieutenant General Sir Reginald S. May, Quartermaster General to the Forces; Lieutenant General Sir Hugh S. Elles, the Master General of the Ordnance; and a number of "over-age" generals.

In France in the fall of 1937 a group of generals had been found to be involved in the Cagoulard Affair, a conspiracy financed by German and Italian subsidies to establish a fascist regime. Among others implicated in this conspiracy were Marshals Pétain and Weygand. But nothing happened to them. The scandal was suppressed and the guilty men escaped without punishment. On the other hand, everything possible was done to make life miserable for the ingenious young Colonel de Gaulle. His theories about the mechanized war of the future were laughed at. He was far less lucky than the man who in a sense was his disciple: Heinz Guderian.

Both the French General Staff and the German General Staff had a completely false view of the question of tanks. But once again fate was favorable to the Germans. The aged French generals with their hostility to tanks prevailed. Herr von Fritsch and his friends, who were equally hostile to tanks, could not prevail.



## 5

Hitler negotiated with his generals for three days. Then he handed down his decision.

Many details of these negotiations are known. They took up so much time because Hitler avoided meeting with all his generals at once. He had each one come to him alone for a private talk. From his point of view, it was an extremely wise procedure. It made it far easier for many who had considered deserting Fritsch to turn their coats. For no one was present when they did. It was wise also because it gave Hitler, clever psychologist that he is, an opportunity to treat different men differently. From the many reports on these meetings it is clear that he left no stone unturned to win the generals over to himself.

At no time, however, did he forget the dignity of his office. In these crucial days he was in reality the Fuehrer. He did not try the trick he had used with success so often before, breaking into tears, throwing hysterical scenes, pleading, begging. He did not do so because he knew that this would only be repulsive to Prussian Junkers. He knew that these Junkers could understand only one language: the language of the master, the tone of the master. That was their language.

Hitler presented each of his generals with a *fait accompli*.

He told each of them: I have decided to do this and not to do that. Are you with me or not? He said: I have decided to let Blomberg go. I am no longer satisfied with the title Commander in Chief. I have decided to take over the command of the armed forces myself. The Air Force, he said, would continue as an independent organization equal to the Army and to the Navy. The armored forces would be given the broadest freedom and independence within the Army.

One of the generals conferred with Hitler only very briefly. This was General Walter von Reichenau. It was not necessary to talk very long, for Reichenau was in complete agreement with Hitler. Furthermore, his thoughts were probably already

busy with the important role he was soon to play. And during the time he spent in Berlin he devoted himself to convincing the others that Hitler had taken the right course and that they must break with Fritsch.

The man who created the greatest difficulties for Adolf Hitler was Ludwig Beck, Chief of the General Staff. He could make trouble because he was the only man whom Hitler could not afford to let go at the moment; and of all the generals this same Beck was second only to Fritsch in his stalwart opposition to Hitler's plans.

Ludwig Beck had been by far the most important and the most interesting man in the German Army since the Treaty of Versailles. He hardly looked like a general, or like a soldier at all. Tall and extremely slender, he looked younger than he was—and he was very young for the position he held. No one would have suspected him of being fifty. He had the finely molded head of a scholar, and he wore his fine ash-blond hair longer than most military men. He did not wear the customary monocle, but an ordinary pair of spectacles. He spoke in a low, cultured voice, and he usually emphasized his words with gestures of his unusually delicate, almost feminine hands.

Beck came from a fine old German family, and though not a nobleman like most of his comrades, he looked more aristocratic than most of them. He was an intelligent and gifted man. He spoke French and English fluently. He liked living in Paris and seized every opportunity to spend a few days on the Seine. He had friends throughout the world. He liked good food. He was friendly with all the foreign military attachés in Berlin, and once a month he invited them to dinners at the famous Horcher Restaurant. At these dinners he would cleverly feed them completely false information that always sounded utterly authentic about the state of German armament.

Beck was one of the generals who had thought a Nazi regime in Germany would be "useful." He had done his share behind the scenes to bring Hitler to power. His own reasons for backing Hitler had nothing to do with enthusiasm for National

Socialism. On the contrary. He despised the Party and he considered Party members idiots. He thought that he was strong enough to hold Hitler and his advisers in check.

Beck was full of ideas. For years he had been Chief of the German General Staff when this Staff had no official existence and existed under another name. Later, when Hitler officially resurrected the General Staff, Beck thought he would be able to use Hitler as a puppet. He did not doubt that he could get rid of him whenever he wanted to. But the developments of the past few years had forced him to doubt whether he had been right. He was no longer at all certain that he could get rid of Hitler. He was nonplused, and in so far as his placid, philosophical temperament allowed him to be, annoyed. Above all, he was annoyed with Hitler's present plans.

He told Hitler frankly that his intended reorganization would mean the destruction of all the work of the General Staff and that if a real war had to be waged under such conditions it could not be won. He warned Hitler, as he had warned him before the occupation of the Rhineland, though he could not put the same pressure on him as he did then. However, he offered Hitler his resignation and went home.

That was on February 2. On February 3 Hitler sent for him again and insisted that he remain as Chief of the General Staff even under the new conditions of which he did not approve. Beck asked for time to consider, but finally agreed with certain reservations. Hitler promised to meet his conditions. At the moment he would have done everything to satisfy Ludwig Beck. He knew that he could not carry out the plans with which he intended to rock Europe during the next eight months if he did not have his Chief of Staff.

For, after all, it was Ludwig Beck who had devised those plans.

## 6

The generals made their decisions. The lines were formed. Generals von Brauchitsch, List, Geyer, and von Reichenau

backed Hitler unconditionally. With certain reservations, Generals von Bock, Blaskowitz, and von Kleist joined them. Solidly for Fritsch were Generals von Rundstedt, von Leeb, von Kuechler, von Kluge, von Kressenstein, von Weichs, von Witzleben, Lutz, Dollmann, Knochenhauer, Ulex.

Von Kleist, though agreeing in principle with Hitler's plans, quarreled with the Fuehrer because he did not want Fritsch to be dismissed. Old Rundstedt and Ritter von Leeb, too, had a stormy final interview with Hitler and then withdrew angrily. They and all the others who had backed Fritsch were dismissed. In most cases, to be sure, the dismissals lasted only a few weeks. When they were recalled, they all came back. Even the resentful Rundstedt and von Leeb.

Only one general refused to return. This was old Freiherr Kress von Kressenstein. He informed Hitler that he was not only displeased with all the innovations, but that he was sick of the whole Third Reich. And he did not rest content with retiring on pension; he went a step further and left Germany. He settled in Zurich.

On February 6 Hitler's official newspaper, the *Voelkischer Beobachter*, reported the result of all the many conferences.

Blomberg and Fritsch had resigned because of poor health. In addition, a number of other generals had resigned—these were the ones who were later recalled.

The Air Force was to be reorganized and Goering was promoted to Field Marshal of the Reich.

Ribbentrop was replacing Freiherr von Neurath as Foreign Minister.

A so-called Secret Cabinet Council was established, to consist of Hitler, Ribbentrop, Goering, Hess, Goebbels, Dr. Lammers, Admiral Raeder, and Generals Keitel and von Brauchitsch.

Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces was General Keitel.

Commander in Chief of the Army was von Brauchitsch.

In other words, there no longer existed a real War Ministry.

Instead, General Keitel was placed in command of the entire armed forces. But behind Keitel stood Hitler, and Keitel was subordinate only to Hitler.

The entire press of the world discussed in detail these radical changes. The press recognized that something important had taken place. But it did not know just what had taken place. Even in Germany it was not realized that what had happened was important. The newspapers, after all, wrote only what Dr. Goebbels told them to write, and he told them little.

Outside Germany, commentators and experts sought in vain for the key to the riddle and engaged in remarkable speculations on the significance of these changes for the future of Germany and Europe. Many believed correctly that the generals themselves had initiated the whole thing. But most of those who believed this suspected that the reason for the generals' action was an approaching economic disaster brought on by the failure of Goering's Four Year Plan.

Abroad, the view prevailed that what had happened represented a victory of the generals over Hitler. They considered it proof of such a victory that Wilhelm Keitel, one of the old-guard conservatives among the generals, now headed the armed forces. Keitel was an unimpressive and unimportant man who looked unimpressive and unimportant. No outsider knew much about him. In World War I, during which he had served on the General Staff, he had not distinguished himself. He was a blank page. His comrades, of course, knew him. Keitel was known in Army circles as "the dumbest general."

Hitler knew that Keitel would do whatever he wanted him to do. And the commentators who believed that the "conservative" party had won and that the generals would stop Hitler from taking any hasty steps—above all, from plunging the country into a war—were doubly mistaken. For in the first place the conservatives had not won; Hitler had won. And in the second place the generals had no intention of stopping Hitler from waging a war for which they had been carefully planning for so many years. One of the strongest reasons for Hitler's

insistence that Ludwig Beck stay on as Chief of Staff was the very prospect of war, and it was for this reason that many of the generals who disapproved of Hitler's changes came back.

The real victim in the struggle between Hitler and his generals was a man who had not even participated. This was Goering. To be sure, Hitler had promoted him, and his Air Force was assured of an independent existence. But Goering had hoped for far more. Goering had thought he would receive the job Hitler had given Keitel. Goering, and many of the top men in the Third Reich, had believed that Hermann Goering would be the next War Minister or Chief of the Armed Forces. But Hitler preferred the colorless Keitel. And this was the beginning of a process which saw the fat Nazi Number Two steadily lose power and importance in the German *Wehrmacht*, and hence lose power and importance in the Third Reich as a whole.

The other victor, besides Hitler, was a man who likewise had remained in the background during the actual struggle: Heinrich Himmler.

Himmler, representative of the most radical wing of the Party, who was never willing to compromise when the influence of the Party was at stake, was pleased that the reorganization would facilitate the infiltration of Nazi officers into the Army. As far as the Army was concerned, he considered this only the beginning. For, as it was later revealed, he had hopes and plans of his own which could never have been realized so long as Fritsch was in command.

Herr von Fritsch was still confined to his quarters, and this was Himmler's work. We may assume that few things have ever given Himmler as much satisfaction as this arrest of Fritsch. For Himmler had long been at odds with Herr von Fritsch. Their dispute dated back to 1935, to a certain visit on the part of some SS men to the War Ministry. The men had stormed in with guns drawn and had demanded that certain incriminating documents from the secret archives be turned over to them. Instead of the documents, they received bullets

through the head from the Ministry guards, and Herr von Fritsch took a grim pleasure in sending the bodies to Heinrich Himmler. When a number of Gestapo agents arrived at the Ministry to investigate, they were arrested and not released for several days.

Heinrich Himmler did not forget such humiliations. And now at last he could say that the time had passed forever when SS or Gestapo men could not enter the War Ministry.

Herr von Brauchitsch was not particularly fond of the Gestapo or its chief. Still—

Though Herr von Brauchitsch, the new High Commander, was a charming man, he was not much more important from the purely military point of view than his comrade, General Keitel. Anyhow, everything was more or less laid out for him. He had Ludwig Beck, his Chief of staff, at his side; the plans for the strategy of the next several months were already worked out down to the smallest detail.

Even though Herr Brauchitsch was no genius, he knew just as well as his Chief of Staff that the German Army was not ready to engage in a full-scale war. But he believed that for the present no full-scale war was imminent. Hitler himself had guaranteed that. A few years before, when Hitler had given the order to remilitarize the Rhineland, Ludwig Beck had objected that if the French took any action at all, the Rhineland could not be held. But Brauchitsch had been one of the few who voted for the reoccupation of the Rhineland. He believed in Adolf Hitler and in Hitler's guarantee that the French simply would not do anything.

This then was the setup on the stage when the curtain rose to what later proved the last act of the tragedy of the German generals.

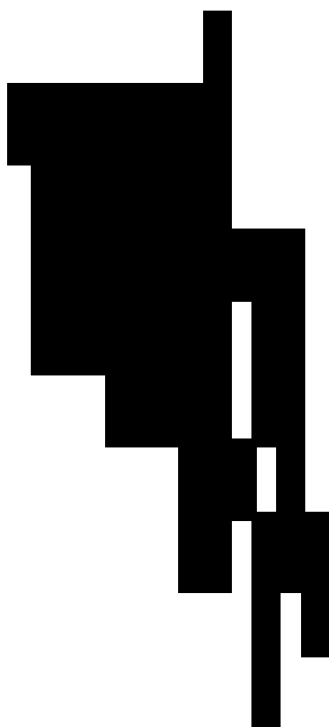
None of them yet knew that they were in the middle of their own tragedy. The dismissal and arrest of Herr von Fritsch was considered a personal mishap—and nobody guessed that this one personal mishap was going to be followed by quite a number of others of even more serious nature. Ludwig Beck

alone was wondering whether he and his comrades were still able to control Hitler as they had thought they could forever. But even Beck was optimistic. None of the others even wondered. Those, who after being angry with Hitler for a few weeks came back to do their duty by the Fatherland, could hardly imagine that this was indeed the last time they had had any kind of free choice. Herr von Brauchitsch and many of his comrades, to be sure, did not see anything to worry about in the future. They were not going to have a war because the Fuehrer had promised there would be no war and, as in the case of the Rhineland, it would come out all right. There would simply be a parade.

Such was the setup when the High Commander of the German Army, Walter von Brauchitsch, gave his troops the order to march into Austria.

That was on March 11, 1938.





*THE GENERAL STAFF  
NEVER SURRENDERED*

*The Greater German General Staff and all similar organizations shall be dissolved and may not be reconstituted in any form.*

TREATY OF VERSAILLES, ARTICLE 160



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TREATY OF VERSAILLES, ARTICLE 160

1

2

## THERE WAS NO PEACE

### I

**D**URING the night of March 11, 1938, some one hundred thousand German soldiers along the Austrian border began to move. The first German column crossed the border near Salbruecken, on the road to Salzburg. It moved on toward Innsbruck. A second column marched through Kufstein, a third toward Schaerding. Late on the afternoon of the 12th, the vanguard, consisting of some fifteen tanks, entered Vienna. The rest of the troops arrived in the course of the night. On Sunday morning Himmler and Heydrich arrived by plane in Vienna.

Adolf Hitler was already there.

The Fourth Army Corps (Dresden), the Tenth Army Corps (Hamburg), the Eleventh Army Corps (Hanover), two panzer divisions, and two mechanized divisions took part in the conquest of Austria.

Besides the tanks and the infantry, there were also some eight hundred planes. And an enormous number of automobiles and trucks were used for transport. Among these, requisitioned Berlin buses attracted considerable attention.

This march to Vienna had been preceded by an attempted putsch, or rather an attempted conspiracy, that failed at the last moment. This was the so-called T plan, which had been devised by Rudolf Hess, the Chief of the Liaison Staff, and the Austrian Nazi, Theodor Habicht, who was living in exile in Germany. This T plan provided for a civil war in Austria in the course of which the German troops would intervene to "restore order." The letter T stood for Tavs, the name of the Viennese engineer who was entrusted with the carrying out of the plan.

But the search of a house by the Viennese police had given

the Schuschnigg government knowledge of the plan, and Schuschnigg promptly took steps to put down the impending "revolt."

The T plan was based on the conception of a political war which would have a military sequel. Although it failed and although now the military side of the action was placed in the foreground, the element of political warfare was by no means eliminated. For the first time in modern warfare the political factor was a carefully calculated part of the military invasion.

Or, to put it negatively, the invasion was based on the expectation that the Austrian Army would not fight back. Hitler had guaranteed that. Hitler had promised his generals that the Austrians would not fire a shot. This was the second time within a few years that Hitler had taken such a responsibility, and it was the second time that the German General Staff undertook an invasion that was not based solely on military calculations; an invasion that depended upon a knowledge of political warfare—which is to say, that depended upon factors the General Staff could not check upon and could not influence.

Nevertheless, Ludwig Beck did not depend so completely upon Hitler as it later seemed he had done. He had worked out a plan which took into consideration the possibility of Austrian military resistance. Only after the border had been crossed and it became clear that Hitler had been right did Beck accept conditions as they were and allow the invasion to be turned into a parade. The process was just as simple as that. That is, up to the border the generals were in command. From then on, Hitler commanded. The Fuehrer had guaranteed that the invasion would take place without incident, and the Fuehrer was right.

But from that moment on, everything became indescribably disorganized.

The invasion had a purpose other than the conquest of Austria. It was intended also as a dress rehearsal for the new weapons of the Army. It was supposed to show how the Air Force and the infantry could co-operate and how motorized

troops would advance along the highways. It was supposed to be a testing ground for Guderian's theories concerning light and heavy tanks.

But it turned out that the new arms and the new methods fell down in the clutch. According to the reports of French, British, and Belgian eyewitnesses—they were, of course, military intelligence officers—the invasion would have been disastrous had it been a real invasion.

The absolute prerequisite for an advance of motorized troops is that the highways be kept clear in both directions, so that men and material can be moved swiftly from one point to the other. The roads were clear and everything worked well until the border was reached. From the Austrian border on, the highways were completely blocked. Everywhere, tanks and armored cars were stalled, unable to move. Precious hours were wasted until they could be dragged over to the side of the road. The traffic jam disorganized the transportation of fuel, and hundreds of armored cars had to stop because their gasoline was used up. The jammed roads also held up the infantry. The men were forced to march in goose-step in the ditches alongside the road, which was time-consuming and exhausting. The provisioning of the soldiers also did not function. They finally arrived in Vienna dog-tired and hungry.

Though scarcely a shot had been fired.

Perhaps the worst feature of the entire march was that the heavy artillery was compelled to stop in the middle of the roads. In a real war the heavy artillery would have had to go forward in order to hold the points that the infantry and the tanks had captured. But instead of moving forward, there stood the heavy artillery in the middle of the roads, to delight the eyes of the British and French military attachés.

The Austrian Army had made its contribution to the general confusion. The Austrians had not fired, but, understandably enough, they wanted to retreat. They retreated along the same roads the German troops were using for their invasion. The



two armies became so tangled up that it was impossible for either one to pass.

Since the Germans were determined to have the heavy artillery in Vienna for the parade, it was finally loaded on to freight trains and sent by rail to the Austrian capital. In military terms that meant that "the enemy" had had to aid in the invasion.

Conditions in the air were chaotic. The fliers were supposed to cover the Army; individual squadrons were to fly above the tanks and the marching soldiers while the pursuit planes went on ahead. But since the troops and the tanks beneath them did not advance, the fliers began to circle around. Finally they became bored or realized that their gasoline was fast disappearing, and they decided to fly on ahead to Vienna. As a result, during the greater part of its march the Army was completely uncovered from the air. Not until the parade in Vienna, was a certain amount of order restored to the Air Force.

It is not hard to imagine the confusion that might have been caused if the Austrians had possessed and used a hundred planes, or two or three tank divisions. And if France and England had decided to take any action whatever—

Hitler himself had to wait on the road for hours—he, too, or rather his auto column, was caught up in the general confusion. Men of his entourage spoke about the fits of rage he indulged in during these waits. Everyone thought his behavior childish, especially in view of the enormous success his reckless adventure in Austria had achieved.

But it was quite logical that Hitler should get excited. For here he had clear proof that military matters were not as simple as he had imagined. The "war" had progressed according to schedule so long as it was led by the generals. It stopped the moment Hitler took over. During those long waits on the road Hitler must have realized how much he needed his generals.

And that was reason enough for his fury.

## 2

The march into Austria had not gone well. But that did not mean it would be impossible to co-ordinate the movements of the infantry and the Air Force, or that tanks were not a weapon to be reckoned with. Yet this is exactly what the foreign observers concluded and so reported to their governments and General Staffs. According to these reports, Germany was "still far from ready" and there was "no cause for anxiety."

As has been indicated, many of the German generals, up to the invasion of Austria, were not too partial to tanks as a weapon. And for years they had been heatedly discussing the problem of how the Air Force should be employed. But these men had been trained all their lives to recognize a fact when they saw it. And it was precisely the unsuccessful march to Vienna that caused many of them to modify their views. But the more convinced they became that tanks and planes had possibilities, the more anxious they were to deny it. The reports of the foreign military experts gave them their chance.

It was Ludwig Beck who first realized how to make the most of this opportunity. Once more he invited his friends, the foreign military attachés, to the Horcher Restaurant. And once more, after all the gentlemen had enjoyed a splendid meal, they heard the German Chief of Staff himself reluctantly admit that the German tanks had proved to be largely unusable. Beck gave them to understand that the methods of tank production would have to be completely overhauled, and that the problem of rubber tires was almost insoluble—that, in other words, the prospects for the German Army were none too bright.

Beck went even further. He hinted that the generals had been against the Austrian invasion from the first and that Hitler had carried it out against their will. Thus it was that over cognac and coffee in the Horcher Restaurant a new legend arose. Beck did not actually commit himself, and left it to the military attachés to put two and two together. The result of their little arithmetical operation was that the whole dispute

between Hitler and the generals in January and February became in retrospect a quarrel over the question of invading Austria. The generals—well, this was just another indication that the generals weren't such bad fellows after all.

Nothing is further from the truth. For years the German General Staff had been preparing to invade Austria. The so-called O plan (O for *Ostmark*) had it worked out in detail. There was never any question that an invasion would take place. The only question was, when. The task of the General Staff in all countries is to work out mobilization and deployment plans in case of war—plans for every conceivable and every inconceivable situation. The German General Staff had countless such plans, providing for all possible alternatives. These plans were usually given numbers. But in the case of Austria, there was only one plan—the O plan. Hitler himself provided the best proof of this. A few days before the invasion of Austria, when Schuschnigg was in Berchtesgaden, Hitler decided to show him that all resistance was useless. He sent for Keitel and Reichenau, who were waiting in the adjoining room.

"Bring the plans in," he told the dismayed generals. And a few moments later Hitler showed the unfortunate Schuschnigg how he intended to conquer Austria. There it was in black and white, with every contingency provided for.

The General Staff needed Austria as a basis for the further conquests it had in mind. With Austria occupied, the right flank would be safe in the coming campaign against Czechoslovakia. Long before Austria was taken the Germans had carefully worked out how they could invade Czechoslovakia through this right flank, thus coming up to the Little Maginot Line from the rear.

All in all, Ludwig Beck was well pleased. The invasion of Austria had proved to him that something more important to him and his generals than all of Austria had succeeded. That something was the secret mobilization.

The German military apparatus had always been one to move swiftly. In World War I and even before, the transportation

of a standing army to the borders and the calling up of civilians and reservists had functioned with the highest efficiency. Still, the calling up of civilians took at least a few days, and it could hardly be done without the knowledge of the rest of the world. German civilians were given less time to report for mobilization than in any other country, but they did have to be given some time.

The secret mobilization, which functioned perfectly in the case of Austria, did away with this. The secret mobilization was made possible by a complicated system which held civilians always in readiness and instantly placed the transportation system at the disposal of the military.

In any case, Beck did not make too great an effort to keep the secret mobilization secret. He realized that secret mobilization could be of the utmost value not only in case of war but in peacetime as well. Therefore he gave his friends, the foreign military attachés, a detailed account of the secret mobilization, and he was well satisfied with the impression he made. As a matter of fact, it may well be assumed that the requisitioned Berlin buses that entered Austria had been requisitioned by the General Staff primarily in order to convince the outside world of the tremendous possibilities of the secret mobilization.

After Austria, therefore, the foreign observers were asked to believe that the generals had not really wanted to invade Austria and had done so unwillingly, that the tanks and the Air Force were not ready, and that Germany therefore could not strike; but that Germany could strike very swiftly when she was ready because of the secret mobilization.

A tangle of contradictions apparently. That is exactly what they were. For this was what Beck intended. Over coffee and liqueurs in the Horcher Restaurant, Ludwig Beck carried on his own psychological campaign.

The heroes of the Austrian invasion were Generals von Reichenau and von Bock. Herr von Reichenau held all the strings in his hand—as far as the Austrian border, of course. The actual invasion started from Munich. This was the base

of operations. After the conquest of Austria Herr von Bock was promoted to Colonel General and Commander in Chief of the German Army in Austria.

Ludwig Beck received no mention. But he and his men on the General Staff were used to being in the background. They knew that was the fate of every general staff. They were pleased—you could work better without publicity—and Ludwig Beck and his associates now got down to more serious work. Everything that had happened in Austria had to be analyzed carefully; all possibilities of error must be determined and eliminated from future plans. They had been lucky to get away without actual fighting, but they could not expect to have such luck in Czechoslovakia. They had to count on plenty of fighting in Czechoslovakia.

While the victory celebrations were still being held in Vienna—delicately mingled with the first pogroms—Beck set to work. No, he didn't mind that he had not been mentioned. There were others who had also not been mentioned, others who, Beck thought, had done more for the conquest of Austria than von Reichenau and von Bock.

These were von Hindenburg, von Seeckt, and Groener.

It may be objected that these generals had been dead a long time; that they were generals from World War I. True enough. But no one knew better than the Chief of the German General Staff that the World War had never ended. No one knew better than Beck that the General Staff had never stopped working, planning, organizing.

### 3

The Greater General Staff it was called then—the building was large, imposing, austere; with its dark-red brick it seemed almost like a fortress. It stood on the Koenigsplatz, next to the Reichstag building. The people of Berlin passed by shyly and reverently. It gave them a strange feeling. Perhaps that had something to do with the fact that in pre-1914 Berlin, people did not think of war or did not like to think of war. Or perhaps

it had to do with the members of the General Staff themselves.

Imperial Berlin was full of soldiers and officers, but the members of the General Staff stood out. It was not only because of the crimson collars and the crimson braid on their uniforms. The members of the General Staff looked different in other ways, too. You could see at a glance that they seldom were out in the open. They had pale faces; their eyes looked tired. They carried briefcases under their arms and they seldom smiled, at least not in public.

They came and went. They entered the building on the Koenigsplatz, climbed the broad, thickly carpeted marble stairs. The building that looked like a fortress from outside looked like a Ministry within. The Staff members joked about the building they worked in. They called it "The Big Hut." But behind this nickname there was a deep pride, almost a reverence.

Reverence was an emotion wholly unfamiliar to most of the members of the General Staff. They were in a class by themselves and anyone who did not belong to the General Staff simply wasn't worthy of their notice. Almost anyone could lie in a trench, fire a gun in the front lines, freeze, starve and sweat. But only a few could work on the General Staff.

It was true. The members of the General Staff were the outstanding minds of the German officers corps. They had enjoyed the best military education the world had ever known. They never forgot it and they never let slip an opportunity to remind the ordinary mortals with whom they came in contact that it was so. They were unmitigated egoists. They had no understanding for the troubles of their fellow men because they had no idea what a fellow man was. They were megalomaniacs.

They came to the red building on the Koenigsplatz, climbed the marble stairs, and vanished into their offices. They sat at their desks in the operations department, in the political department, in the intelligence service. They had their conferences, worked out their plans, read through their documents.

They worked in a comfortable, almost luxurious environment. There were deep-piled Persian rugs, handsome antique furni-

ture; there were paintings, not all of them first rate, but still historical pictures by well-known German painters. There was an atmosphere of quiet, almost of solemnity. The men who worked here knew that theirs was the first General Staff in the world, first in the historical sense and first in the quality of their endeavors. They knew this and they never forgot it.

They sat there and they worked on plans to mobilize the German people for the war, to shelter, clothe, and feed their troops, to provide ammunition. They worked on plans for invading foreign countries, annihilating foreign armies, occupying foreign territory. None of their work could be termed romantic; it was all sober calculation. It was based on carefully considered contingencies, on the conjunction of thousands of details that had been gathered by innumerable departments and set down in innumerable documents. It was all tremendously important work; the members of the General Staff were convinced of this.

They felt it especially when they came together for conferences in the map room, that enormous hall that contained hundreds of thousands of maps. Here, long before the outbreak of World War I, they might have felt themselves the masters of the world. These men, who for generations had been trained to read maps; for whom a city was a dot, a river a blue line, a mountain a series of convolutions on a contour map—these men felt when they sat in the map room that the world had no secrets from them. They felt they knew every foot of ground, and that every foot of ground had been considered in some plan of attack, some operations plan, as something that had to be marched across, something that had a function in a battle, something that must be taken and cleared of the enemy.

When the Great War began, only a few remained in the building on the Koenigsplatz. Most of them went to the various fronts to continue their work there, to study and learn how correct their calculations had been, and to make new plans based on new experiences and new situations. But their change of scene did not mean that these men changed. Wherever they worked

—in a chateau in France or in the town halls of some Polish city—they were still in their building on the Koenigsplatz. They fought the whole world; they were in Belgium, in Russia, in Rumania, in Italy—but in reality they never left their map room. They knew a good deal about their war, but they had never known anything about the human beings whom they haughtily shut out of their world. They had never known anything about the Germans who lived a few doors away from them, those Germans who were beneath their notice because they did not belong to the General Staff. Consequently, they knew nothing about the human beings Germany was now fighting. They thought they had calculated every conceivable factor—every foot of ground, every hill, every river, every problem of transportation of munitions and provisions. They could not understand that there was something they had forgotten to calculate, something that perhaps they could not calculate at all: human beings. And the varying reactions of human beings began to play a role that threw a wrench into their careful machinery.

Many of them to the very end did not suspect the truth. How else was it possible that as late as March, 1918, they could compel Russia to sign the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which gave Germany more than a third of Russia's European population and more than half her European industrial centers? How else was it possible that when America entered the war, the General Staff's Chief of Intelligence, the notorious Colonel Walther Nicolai, could declare: "They'll soon be in the same boat as the Rumanians."

To be sure, not all were so innocent and unsuspecting. Some of them early realized—extraordinarily early—that Germany had lost the war. Perhaps the best among many proofs of this is the fact that toward the latter part of 1916 a small volume was published in Berlin that bore the significant title, *The Next War*. The author was alleged to be a "neutral diplomat"; in reality he was Colonel Buch-Mueller, an officer with close ties to the High Command.



In this book the character of the next war was examined, and at the same time the failures Germany had endured during the World War—up to 1916—were caustically exposed. The author declared that next time both economic and psychological preparations must be improved.

A few months later another book appeared in Leipzig, *Germany's War Aims* by Professor Erich Brandenburg. The professor did not state flatly that Germany would lose the war, but he hinted at it. He declared that Germany could scarcely observe the coming peace treaty as binding.

"It is absolutely necessary to realize clearly that for a considerable time to come international treaties and courts of arbitration will be incapable of assuring world peace." The professor suggested immediate rearmament after the war, in order to break the peace treaty that Germany would be compelled to sign.

On February 26, 1917, Reichstag Deputy Wildgrube made a speech in which he stated unequivocally that Germany should begin to think of a second world war, since the first World War could not bring about any lasting solution of international problems.

Around this same time a book by Friedrich Reiger was published, *The Armed Forces of the Future*. Reiger suggested that a detailed plan be prepared for the next war.

These and similar books, pamphlets, newspaper articles, and speeches show clearly that their authors already considered the loss of the first World War as a *fait accompli*. For in the event of a victory, all the plans for world rule which were expounded by them could have been carried out at once, and a second world war would have been unnecessary.

Among the high officers it was General Max Hoffmann—the man who had led the highly successful war on the Russian front and to whom in a large measure belongs the glory with which Hindenburg was covered—who first saw that the war would not be won. In his diary which he published later, and whose

validity we have no reason to doubt, he said so on many pages written during the years of 1916 and 1917.

General Ludendorff himself was often not nearly so optimistic as those who saw him at work believed to the last. He too counted on a "next war" and hoped that Germany would begin to prepare for it as soon as possible. He himself worked to this end right in the midst of the last war. In September, 1917, he wrote a memorandum outlining a tremendous political and sociological project. In this memorandum he discussed "the decline of our people's strength and military power"; "the restoration and improvement of the German people's strength and military power"; and "the increase of Germany military power."

He wrote: "Germany needs not only a swift and complete restoration, but also an increase and improvement of her previous military power in order to face the future.... The High Command is interested in these questions primarily for the following reasons: Future establishment of boundaries.... Conquest of new territory to provide new manpower for the Army and the opening of new sources of raw materials for the needs of the Army.... Temporary occupation of conquered territories."

The man who saw first and most clearly in what direction events were heading was General Groener.

Groener was not a Prussian general. He came from southern Germany, from Wuerttemberg, the most democratic part of the country. His father had been a military official of no great importance. Groener definitely did not belong. He had a peasant's face. He was square-built, he wore glasses, was not haughty, and knew better than most of his comrades what the German people thought and felt.

During the war Groener was head of the German railroad system (*Eisenbahn Abteilung*) within the General Staff. In the summer of 1917 he had to leave this post. The work he had done merited praise, but the chiefs of the General Staff did not share his views in other matters. The reason for his dismissal is significant.

One of Groener's responsibilities was the transportation of war materials to the front. It was, therefore, in his province to see to it that the factories worked full blast with no interruption by strikes, especially strikes on the part of munitions workers. Thus he came in contact with representatives of the unions and of the Social Democratic Party. In 1917 the Social Democratic Party, at that time already one of the greatest political factors in Germany, informed Groener that the workers had little sympathy for the annexationist ideas of German industry. When Groener passed this information along, with the suggestion that some consideration be given to the attitude of labor, he fell into disgrace. Since he had deigned to speak with Socialists, he was considered a Socialist by the generals.

But early in 1918 he was recalled. For a time he was Chief of Staff of the High Command of the Eichhorn Army Corps which was stationed in Russia. Here he had an opportunity to study conditions in Bolshevik Russia. He realized that the Russian Revolution had gained strength through the mistakes of the former regime. And this made him reflect deeply. In October, 1918, when he was called to take Ludendorff's place after the latter's resignation, he made up his mind not to forget what he had learned in Russia. He decided to issue a second warning.

This time his warning was not ignored.

By this time, however, almost everything was lost. The war was certainly lost for Germany. Groener had to act quickly if he were to save anything at all.

He talked to a hastily assembled group of officers—varying accounts indicate from one hundred to three hundred—and suggested that the Kaiser abdicate. As he later admitted, General Groener had expected the entire imperial officers' corps to protest furiously. He had expected that these officers, who had taken the oath of loyalty to the Kaiser and the House of Hohenzollern, would defend the Kaiser with their lives.

Nothing of the kind happened. Only a very small group of officers was not content with this solution and demanded that the Army continue to fight the Allies on the one hand and the re-

volts that were springing up all over Germany on the other hand. The leader of this small clique of young officers was Fedor von Bock, then only thirty-eight years old—the same von Bock who twenty years later was to march into Vienna.

But the young officers did not carry enough weight. Old Hindenburg, from whom Groener had expected trouble, kept quiet. At the decisive moment he did not lift a finger for his Kaiser. He remained silent even when the Kaiser himself asked for his advice and support. He remained silent when the Kaiser stepped into the car that took him to Holland.

The other members of the General Staff also remained silent. Well, the war was lost. That scarcely stirred them. They refused to admit that it was a war that had been lost—it was only a phase of the war, a single round. The war would go on and would be won. They packed their bags, entered their cars, and drove through the ruined French and Belgian villages back to Berlin. But even as they were packing their bags and while they were riding in their cars, they were already back in the red building on the Koenigsplatz, back in the room with the thousands of maps that contained the secrets of all the world. Already they were working out new plans, conceiving new ways of winning back the territory they had just lost, and more besides.

In the Operations Department of the General Staff, ever since the Staff had come into the open, sat an officer whom few knew either by name or by face. He was called Staff Officer IA. He was chief of the Department of Operations. He was the man who bore the final responsibility for the work of the Operations Department—which is to say, the final responsibility for *the plan*.

The plan was more important than the man. This has always been a Prussian tradition. It is, therefore, not so strange as it may seem that few outsiders ever knew or cared to know the real name of Staff Officer IA. Few people, for instance, know that before World War I the name of this man—who was of

vital importance in the laying out of the plans for World War I—was Erich Ludendorff.

Staff Officer IA, whatever his name at whatever time, and his work were more important and decisive than those of many of the popular commanding generals and their much-publicized heroic deeds. For they had merely executed—he had conceived. They were only the tools; he was the brain.

Staff Officer IA did not stop working for a day, for an hour. For Officer IA there had been no defeat, no armistice, no Versailles. To Officer IA there existed only one reality: *the plan*.

#### 4

The last battle of World War I was reported in no military communiqué. This last battle was lost by the Allies.

This last battle centered around the armistice conditions. Marshal Foch and Clemenceau took the perfectly reasonable view that any future German rearmament must be prevented before it could get started. The most obvious and best way to do that was immediately to lay hands on the major part of the German Army and German war materials, and to hold on to them at least until the Peace Conference. In the armistice conditions, therefore, the French General Staff provided impossibly short time-limits within which the Germans were to leave the occupied regions. It did not seem humanly possible for them to keep those time-limits. But if they could not get out in time the war material that remained behind would automatically fall into the hands of the Allies, and the remaining German troops would automatically become prisoners of war.

But the Germans did keep the time-limits. Undoubtedly, this was due to the fact that the retreat had been prepared for three months. Also due to the work of the railroad expert, General Groener. It was also partly the work of Hindenburg. Their achievement was unquestionably a strategic feat. It was one of the greatest triumphs of the German military machine. For by retreating successfully in record time the German military

machine proved that it could still control the mass of its soldiers, at a time when revolution had already flared up all over Germany.

Under the same conditions, the enlisted men in almost any other military machine would certainly have deserted. The consequence of such desertion would have been incomparable confusion, and Foch's time-limits would not have been kept.

But the German soldiers marched back home with exemplary discipline under the leadership of their generals. They could not dream that this last act of discipline would make possible the war of tomorrow; that they themselves and their sons and grandsons were qualifying as cannon fodder for a new war.

The generals also returned. They were not so weary as their soldiers; they had not endured the same hardships; they had not spent their days in trenches and under shrapnel fire. With few exceptions, the generals were in excellent health.

But they did not return quite the same as they had departed. Not all reacted in the same way to the lost war and to the revolution, which—in theory at least—uprooted them more radically than the lost war. In general, there were three types of reaction.

There was the group of the "insulted," led by von Hindenburg. There was the group of those who "simply couldn't understand it all" and who were driven almost mad. And there were those who "clenched their teeth and went on working." To this group belonged von Seeckt, von Bock, von Schleicher.

When old Hindenburg returned from the field, he thought at first that all Germany had gone mad. He went to Hanover, settled down in his villa, and sulked. This, understandably enough, was the reaction of most of the older generals. A few weeks before, they had ruled over whole occupied countries, had had hundreds of thousands under their command, wore all sorts of decorations, were personalities of whom all Germany spoke with awe. And now suddenly all that was over. They had been masters and had led the lives of noblemen, and now they were suddenly reduced at best to the level of the *petit bourgeois*.

Naturally, they received their pensions from the State. But only a short while ago they had lived in castles, had their own riding stables and dozens of automobiles. Moreover, their salaries during the war were more than twice as large as their present pensions. And life in the field cost nothing at all. Even if you still owned a villa in Hanover—the fall was too sudden.

The people? The people were ungrateful. After all, the generals told themselves, the Army hadn't done so badly. They had lost the war in the end, all right. That was unpleasant, but it was no reason for turning everything upside down. They would win the next war.

But these crazy Republicans did not even seem to want another war. All of a sudden war had become a crime. All of a sudden there existed such a thing as war guilt.

The people were unjust and illogical, the generals felt. They accused them, the generals, on the one hand of being guilty of starting the war and on the other hand of losing it. A special parliamentary commission was set up and civilians dared to ask them, the generals, about their guilt in starting the war. The generals were asked to face questioning by a deputy named Oskar Kohn. In an outburst of rage, old Hindenburg and others declared that they knew nothing of war guilt. It was true. The words were new to them.

Hindenburg was shocked. They had lost the war, but after all they had not lost it so badly. In November they still had 160 divisions as against 130 in 1914. They could have brought the troops back to the Siegfried Line, which he had had built in 1916 and which all experts considered impregnable. No, Hindenburg declared over and over, the Army was not conquered in the field. But the Army had been deliberately disrupted by the very people who were now questioning the generals about war guilt. *They* were the ones who had lost the war.

Hindenburg and his old friends felt they were guilty of nothing. They had been nonpartisan while the Revolution was raging. Up to the last they had done their duty and brought

their men back safely. But now the Revolution was attacking the generals. It was unjust; it was unfair.

The old generals were very angry. They had lost the confidence of the people. Now, on their part, they lost confidence in the people—if they had ever had it. They consciously shut themselves off and lived only in the past; they wanted nothing more to do with these new times.

Hindenburg's villa in Hanover looked somewhat like a museum. Pictures of the Kaiser, of other generals, of battles; medals, decorations, memoirs. . . .

Memoirs. All the old generals now began writing memoirs. They wanted to relive "the grandeur of the past" in all its details. They corresponded with old comrades and discussed in their letters every minute phase of past battles. On the Kaiser's birthday, on memorial day, the old men came out on the streets in their old, rather ridiculous uniforms, and their spiked helmets, their medals, their decorations. The people turned to look at them. Sometimes they were jeered at, sometimes greeted respectfully. The old men walked straight ahead, looking neither to right nor left. They had learned nothing, but neither had they forgotten anything. They still did not understand why they had lost the war. But they still felt that wars had been lost before. That was no great misfortune. That was no reason for a "new era." That was no reason for tossing them, the old generals, on to the scrap heap.

## 5

Hindenburg sulked, but Hindenburg was not stupid. Better than many of his comrades, he understood that everything was not lost—at least not lost as far as the generals were concerned. It was still possible to save the Army's prestige.

To a large extent, what prestige the Army still commanded had been saved because they had been able to end the war on foreign soil. There is no doubt that this is the main reason why Hindenburg and the other generals asked the German Govern-



ment for an immediate armistice. For this reason they had no intention, despite Hindenburg's later assertion, of retreating to the Siegfried position. As long as the German people themselves were spared the ravages of war, as long as the homeland was not overrun by the enemy, it was easy to maintain the fiction that they had not "really" been defeated. Hindenburg once admitted this to the investigating committee of the Reichstag—a declaration he later repented bitterly and insisted was a misunderstanding.

Hindenburg did one thing more. He refused to send any of his generals to participate in the signing of the Armistice. Thus the Armistice conditions were signed only by parliamentary representatives. This placed a stigma on the young Republic which was never entirely wiped out.

But the prestige of the Army could only be saved completely if responsibility for the entire collapse could be pinned on someone. The representatives of the Army, from Hindenburg down to the last General Staff officer, did not hesitate to blame the entire civilian population of Germany, particularly those who had not instigated the Revolution but who later seized the reins of the Republic. However, the final and most effective war-guilt denial came from Ludendorff rather than from Hindenburg.

During a conversation in Berlin with British General Sir Neill Malcolm, some time after the war, Ludendorff declared that he had lost the war because the Government and the Reichstag had deserted him.

"Do you mean you were stabbed in the back?" the Englishman asked.

Yes, that was exactly what Ludendorff meant. That was the slogan he needed. That was the cliché that was spread first through Germany and then through the entire world. Ludendorff even prompted a friend, Hans von Zwehlen, to write a book about it: *The Stab in the Back of the Victorious Army*. There was no reference in the book to the fact that the Army had prepared to retreat months ahead, nor to the fact that it finally asked the Government to arrange for an armistice within

two or three days. (The book appeared in 1921. It was, of course, only one of the many ways the legend was spread.)

But one lie more or less no longer mattered to the German generals.

## 6

Out of the group of men who set their teeth and went on working came the man who wanted to rebuild the Army.

Colonel Hans von Seeckt had been General von Mackensen's Chief of Staff during the war. Mackensen, the general who had never lost a battle. The Revolution found him in Turkey, and winding up affairs there took so long that he did not arrive in Berlin until the middle of December. He at once placed himself at the disposal of the Republican Government and was sent to the Northern Border Guard (*Grenz-Schutz*) at that time near Bartenstein in East Prussia. His purpose there was to guard Germany against incursions of the Poles. Seeckt's General Staff Officer IA with the Northern Border Guard happened to be a certain Herr von Fritsch.

Colonel von Seeckt at that time had a daring plan. He did not feel the war was over at all and he was against signing any kind of peace treaty for the present. His idea was to retreat beyond the Weser with the German Army, or what was left of it, and let the French, British, and Americans march into Germany. It was hardly likely they would penetrate beyond the Weser. Then, Colonel von Seeckt thought, his reorganized army would attack Poland, and after defeating Poland would unite with Russia and again attack the Western Powers. The idea was fantastic but so was the period. And Seeckt was by no means the only high German officer who dealt in such fantastic wish-dreams. General von der Goltz also began to work on an equally farfetched plan, though its procedure was just the reverse of von Seeckt's.

The officers who did not simply sulk after the collapse, those who set their teeth and worked, were convinced from the first that they and their entire group would have a hard time of it.

In the beginning, at any rate. The fact that Social Democrats controlled the Government meant to them that the Government would try to destroy their caste. Temporarily, anyway. It was logical, therefore, that these officers look around for something to do, something in which the new Government could not interfere. And thus there came about the so-called "Baltic Enterprise" of General von der Goltz.

The idea was to send back to Germany as few as possible of the troops stationed in the East. The bulk of them would be held in the border states of the Baltic and a Prussian military camp created there. The people of the Baltic States were expected to co-operate because of their panic-stricken dread of Russia.

General von der Goltz wanted to create a German military colony on the soil of Latvia, to which the peace treaty the Allies had signed with Germany did not apply. Here practice fields and troop camps were to be set up; here the weapons which the Treaty of Versailles forbade the Reich to possess could be stored and tested. From here—when the time came—the Berlin Government could be overthrown.

General von der Goltz hoped to win the silent consent of the Allies by presenting his army as a bulwark against the spread of Communism and by offering his aid in a war of intervention in Russia. But the General had no intention of striking any blows for the Allies. On the contrary. He deduced that the democracies would finally weary of warfare and that sooner or later Germany would be entrusted with the task of finishing off Russia alone. Von der Goltz thought he had a good chance of defeating the Russians, who were still entangled in the confusion of the Revolution. Then Germany would have won part of the war and could compensate herself for her losses in the West by annexations in the East.

But the French General Staff saw through the plan and began lending systematic support to the Letts in their protests against the presence of German troops on their soil. Finally, Clemenceau sent General Niessel and an Inter-Allied Commission to

the Baltic States, after fruitless demands to Berlin that General von der Goltz be recalled. The German Government declared the troops were no longer under German command, but took their orders from Latvia.

Finally, when the Allies threatened armed intervention, von der Goltz retreated. The Berlin Government sent General von Eberhard to Latvia to lead the troops back to Germany. His Chief of Staff was none other than Major von Fritsch. Fritsch postponed the evacuation as long as possible. In December, 1919, however, the Baltic adventure finally had to be abandoned.

In December, 1919, the Treaty of Versailles was already five months old. Five months—in that time the generals had already perceived that a new German Army could be built up despite the Peace Treaty.

They had not waited even so long. They had not depended upon the outcome of daring individual actions, such as that of Herr von der Goltz. They had wasted no time in making sure that a new army and new arms would be available.

The first action of the members of the General Staff was to obtain the enlistment rolls—documents containing all possible data on each soldier, based on and made possible only through rigid enforcement of German registration law since the middle of the nineteenth century. These rolls, containing the records of over ten million German soldiers, were stored in the Army archives in Spandau. One day, on November 10, 1918—that is, during the German Revolution—a column of trucks drove up to the archives building in Spandau and a large force of men hastily loaded the archives on to the trucks. It was no more nor less than robbery on a grand scale. The whole affair was led by a legendary captain from the General Staff whose name has never been revealed.

The trucks vanished somewhere into East Prussia. Probably their contents were unloaded and stored away safely on some Junker's estate.

Evidently the General Staff was not afraid of using illegal

methods. The General Staff would probably not have understood if the robbery of military documents had been called a crime. There could be no such thing as a crime against this Republic that wanted peace. Anything was legal so long as it helped to rebuild the Army.

If it was no crime to oppose the desire of the majority of the German people, who at that time certainly wanted peace, then it certainly could be no crime to evade and break the Treaty of Peace imposed by the former enemy, who was still the enemy to these men and who would certainly be the enemy of tomorrow.

How many troops still remained in Germany after the Armistice and after the armies had returned home—aside from those that von der Goltz kept in the Baltic States and others near the Polish border? And how many troops would the Peace Treaty, which at that time was still in the discussion stage, allow Germany to maintain?

The situation was approximately this:

On November 15, a week after the Revolution, the Government issued a decree which allowed the troops to remain *voluntarily* in the barracks. Thus, temporarily at any rate, they could ignore the demobilization order. The Social Democratic regime had a number of things in mind when it issued this decree. It thought that immediate dismissal of so many men who had no work and no financial support would promote general hardship. It was justifiably afraid that the masses of dismissed soldiers would turn radical. In addition, there were difficulties with Poland. The Poles were claiming large slices of German territory, particularly in Upper Silesia; they threatened that they would not wait for a peace treaty but would present the Allies with a *fait accompli*.

But the Revolutionary Government did not comprehend one thing when it permitted the soldiers to remain voluntarily in the barracks. It did not realize that those who were weary of the war, the pacifists and those who wanted to work, would not make use of this offer. Hence, the only men who remained in

the barracks were those who had no ties to civilian life, who liked the war, who wanted to remain soldiers, mercenaries. In a word, although only a small percentage of the soldiers who returned from the front remained behind in the barracks, those who did were utterly unreliable from the standpoint of the Republic. They were, on the other hand, completely reliable from the standpoint of the officers, to whom no illegal measures were criminal. These soldiers were ready for any illegal measures, for all sorts of wild adventures. They were the same young boys and men who soon afterward became notorious as members of the Free Corps and as the *Feme* murderers. They were the basis for the organizations that were later to be established under the names SA (*Sturmabteilung*) and SS (*Schutzstaffel*).

Exactly one month after the first decree permitting the soldiers to remain voluntarily in the barracks came a second decree permitting these troops to fill out their ranks by recruiting. The decree of December 16 was an appeal for volunteers who would continue to serve as soldiers. The execution of this decree was already out of the hands of the popular government. It was in the hands of the officers' clique.

Fritz Ebert, who later became the first and last Social Democratic President of the Republic, had protested against this turn of events, but he had been overruled. A day before the publication of the decree (which interestingly enough was signed by Hindenburg, though in the name of the People's deputies) Fritz Ebert was visited by two officers. One of these was General Groener. The other was a much younger man, a major whom Groener introduced as an intimate friend of his. It was this major who explained to the old Social Democrat that he would either have to turn the entire management of the decree over to the officers or else they would not help at all. For a mere army major he was rather rude and curt with the head of the provisional government, the chairman of Germany's greatest party, a man behind whom millions of workers stood. And he was also rather curt and rude with certain armed leagues and units that had been organized by the revolutionary workers and

soldiers, partly to protect the Republic, partly to force through their revolutionary demands—after all, there had been a revolution. The major did not seem to understand that.

That was the first time Kurt von Schleicher intervened in German politics.

## 7

The People's Government thought it needed more volunteers in order to protect the Eastern border, where Poland was becoming more menacing, and also in order to hold in check the workers, who were waiting for genuine revolutionary laws.

The protection of the border against Poland—in which Herr von Seeckt participated, as has been mentioned—was hurriedly organized. Free Corps were formed. The officer clique seized the opportunity proffered by the confusion in Upper Silesia and within Germany itself to call up as many troops as possible during the next few months, and to keep the numbers secret. In January, 1919, when the Communist unrest in Berlin reached its height, the Democrats and Social Democrats in Germany could not but be grateful to them for their intervention.

In March, 1919, it was decided that for the time being an army of four hundred thousand men would be raised; that is, kept under arms, organized, and drilled. For the first time the word *Reichswehr* came up.

The blow was therefore all the greater when the conditions of the Peace Treaty became known in May of that year. Germany was to be permitted an army of one hundred thousand men, with four thousand officers. The General Staff was to be dissolved; troops were to be recruited on a twelve-year basis, and only five per cent of them could be discharged in any one year. The officers must enlist for twenty-five years.

The idea was not bad. Especially the limitation on discharges to five per cent a year. This was to prevent the Germans from applying the "Kruemper System" which had been tried out in Prussia between 1806 and 1813. At that time, too, the Prussians

were allowed to have only a small army. But they had evaded the conditions imposed by Napoleon I, by dismissing enlisted men after six or at most twelve months, and recruiting new men. The limitations to four thousand officers who had to enlist for twenty-five years, if it had been carried out, would have made rearmament totally impossible. The ban on the General Staff, if it could have been carried out, would have really prevented a continuation of the war twenty years later.

But none of these military provisions in the Treaty of Versailles were carried out.

## 8

Gustav Noske, one of the Social Democratic People's Representatives (*Volksbeauftragte*), the man who had charge of Army matters, offered the German officers their discharge when the conditions of the Versailles Treaty became known. He was convinced that they would be so outraged by these conditions that they would be unwilling to remain in the Army.

The officer clique had no such thought. They did protest against the Versailles conditions—especially against the war-guilt clause and, logically enough, against the clause that provided for the extradition of German officers. But they did not for a moment consider giving up their posts. They knew it was not merely a question of jobs. It was a question of strategic positions.

Hans von Seeckt, too, had no thought of retiring. On the contrary. On July 7, 1919, he became head of the *Allgemeine Truppenamt* (General Troops Office) in the Reichswehr Ministry. The *Allgemeine Truppenamt* was something entirely new. Its real function and the real function of its chief remained obscure at the moment. If the officers had had their way, it would have remained obscure forever. The very fact that Seeckt was chosen was an indication that it was something far from unimportant. At that time Seeckt was considered by all military experts one of the most capable men on the General Staff,



second only to Ludendorff and possibly to General Max Hoffmann. His work during the war had proved that beyond doubt.

It was only logical, therefore, that Seeckt be made Chief of the new General Staff. For this was all that the mysterious *Allgemeine Truppenamt* meant. The General Staff, forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles, never ceased to exist. It merely donned a slight disguise.

Herr von Seeckt immediately set to work organizing a new army. For this purpose an external structure was necessary. A new body was set up and dubbed the "Preliminary Commission for the Peacetime Army." The Chairman was Herr von Seeckt. Aside from himself and Reichswehr Minister Noske, no one ever knew just what work this commission did. There was still no permanent parliament in Germany, and even if there had been one, it probably would not have got much information out of Herr von Seeckt.

Then Seeckt put into practice an idea that was quite new. He created the "temporary volunteers." Seeckt's idea was to recruit as many soldiers as possible or to keep those already recruited in the Army, and by pointing out to the Allies the internal unrest in Germany, to win concessions as to the number of soldiers Germany would be permitted.

He was not altogether unsuccessful. He obtained permission to reduce the Army gradually during the course of the year 1920 to one hundred thousand men. However, he failed in his efforts to raise the final figure. Seeckt conducted all sorts of dramatic negotiations, appeals to soldier's honor and international comradeship, but the French stuck to their guns. The only concession they made was to increase the permitted number of officers from four thousand to six thousand. For Seeckt's purposes, that was by no means unimportant. As far as the one hundred thousand men went, however, he had no intention of ever restricting himself to such a figure.

For the present, he considered the question of war materials more important. Men who had been dismissed and whose names were on the enlistment rolls could always be called back. De-

stroyed war materials were lost for good, and could not be used even for training purposes. The Peace Treaty provided for the razing of many fortresses, the destruction of factories and of tremendous quantities of munitions, as well as the cessation of all organized military studies.

An international military control commission was formed, consisting of 159 Frenchmen, 151 Englishmen, 23 Italians, 13 Japanese, and 48 Belgians. This commission was to see to it that Germany really disarmed.

But that was not easy. For the officer clique sabotaged the work of the commission from the very beginning. Germans who informed the commission of the hiding places of military stores were sentenced by German courts to heavy fines and long prison terms. Or they were simply murdered by the *Feme*.

To be sure, the members of the commission could go to the Krupp factories and see to it that they were destroyed, or to the Germania shipyards in Kiel, or Blohm and Voss in Hamburg. But it is almost impossible to find concealed arms in a country like Germany. This kind of work could have been completed successfully only with the aid of the pacifist people of Germany. But the Germans were more afraid of the Reichswehr and the *Feme* than they were of the Allies.

There exists an official Reichswehr description of what happened during those days. It was written by Major G. Thomée, who today is a member of the General Staff. He wrote:

"Considerable quantities were saved. Double walls were set up, underground rooms created, entrances walled over or disguised, ventilator shafts in old administration buildings were used as storage places for munitions, as well as the homes of officers, non-commissioned officers, army clerks and tried and true friends. Buildings owned by the Army were rented to private persons and used for the storage of weapons. A widespread intelligence service was set up—after all, the Control Commission had to use German chauffeurs. These men warned in advance where an inspection was to be held. Then, when the Commission received a report that somewhere machine gun

carriages were being manufactured—which was prohibited—the carriages were spirited away and sheep or oxen driven into the factory buildings. After the twentieth such inspection the military commissions became rather fed up. . . . At some still bay or lake enormous rafts were loaded down with rifles and guarded by soldiers in civilian dress. . . . Sometimes a commanding officer of the Reichswehr would call his officers together and give them an order like the following: 'Tonight at ten transport munitions. In order not to arouse suspicion, I ask you gentlemen to be on duty tomorrow morning as usual.' The adjutants of the Reichswehr regiments conducted coded correspondence about stores of arms. Agriculture and industry gave the money the Government could not or would not give. The commands of the military districts and other official posts received money to hire civilian assistants. This was the so-called Black Reichswehr."

The so-called Black Reichswehr.

It was a good little army, especially in a country that was supposed to have only a hundred thousand men under arms. The Black Reichswehr was sometimes twenty thousand men strong, sometimes even thirty thousand. Actually, there was nothing black about it. Its existence was not at all secret. It even had a High Commander. His name was Colonel Fedor von Bock.

Like Seeckt, von Bock was one of those who set his teeth and would not give up the struggle for the Army and for the power his caste and its Army clique had held. He was, after all, much too young to go home and brood like Hindenburg and Mackensen. Like most of his fellows, Fedor von Bock came from an ancient family of soldiers. His father was a prominent officer in the army that had distinguished itself at the siege of Paris. During World War I Fedor von Bock served as a member of the General Staff and won the friendship of the Crown Prince. He was one of the few men whom the Crown Prince addressed as "*Du*"—and von Bock addressed the Crown Prince in the same familiar manner. Bock was an unusually slender, tall man whose face was the product of an interesting mixture

of races—his high cheekbones and faintly slanted eyes indicated more than a drop of Mongol blood.

From the moment he failed to win over his comrades to fight for the Kaiser and against the Revolution, Bock became one of the most fanatic and ruthless enemies of the German Republic. Nevertheless, no government of that Republic ever considered it necessary to take measures against Herr von Bock. In fact, Seeckt appointed him Chief of Staff of the Berlin Military District, one of the key positions in the new Army. From here, he guided the strategy of the Black Reichswehr. The Black Reichswehr was not only a troop, it was also an organization, or better, a sum of many organizations that worked in order to create new troops, to place them, to feed them, etc. By the summer of 1923, the troop of the Black Reichswehr no longer had any reason for existence. By that time it had been found out that many more men than Versailles allowed could be put into the regular Reichswehr. Furthermore, the arms that could be saved had been stored away. In short, the rearmament of Germany was well under way.

The reason for the final dissolution of the Black Reichswehr was the Black Reichswehr itself. On October 1, 1923, Major Franz Buchrucker attempted a putsch in Kuestrin. This failed primarily because Herr von Seeckt withdrew his support. Was it by chance that the putsch took place in the native town of Herr von Bock? True, the leader of the Black Reichswehr refused to be connected with the putsch, but in the many trials that followed the putsch—dealing mainly with *Feme* murders by Black Reichswehr soldiers—the name of Bock was mentioned again and again.

Incidentally, Herr von Bock continued as head of the Black Reichswehr—the institution itself, the organization that went on buying arms, trying them out outside Germany, arranging for secret funds needed for such and other purposes. But neither this nor the repeated mention of his name in connection with the *Feme* murders harmed him.

For Herr von Seeckt held a protective hand over him and

over his career. And strangely enough, Herr von Seeckt had contrived to build up a certain confidence in himself, even a certain popularity, among broad masses of the people. Herr von Seeckt, too, wore a monocle; he also wore a mask instead of a face. He too could never deny for a moment the caste from which he sprang. But he had the air of a man of the world. He could chat amiably; he was not ill-educated, and judged by the standard of Mackensen or Hindenburg he might even have been called an intellectual. The democratic press in Germany was extremely fond of him. And even the members of the international military control commission were charmed by him—against their better sense.

The members of the Control Commission had long since been weary of their jobs. They knew that they were being fooled constantly; they knew, too, that some of the commissioners themselves, embarrassingly enough, had gone into international arms traffic. They removed, in conspiracy with certain German politicians, the arms which they found and which should have been destroyed, and sold them to third parties.

The members of the Control Commission knew that they were hated by the people they were supposed to control. And they knew, too, that in France, England, and Italy, pacifist ideas were winning more and more power and that no one wanted them to send alarmist reports from Germany. Such reports hindered efforts at disarmament. In the end the Germans were not alone in their sabotage of the commission's work. The members of the commission themselves, as the Black Reichswehr historian had pungently remarked, became fed up.

In Berlin and throughout the Reich the commission had sixteen liaison and branch offices and a staff of over eight hundred officers and some six hundred men. By the end of 1926 it had made 33,381 inspections.

But it had never inspected Herr von Seeckt's *Allgemeine Truppenamt*.

The members of the Control Commission knew that the Versailles Treaty had forbidden the Greater General Staff, and

that it was their business to enforce the Treaty. Very well—the red building on the Koenigsplatz, now called the Platz der Republik, stood open to them. If they had inspected it, they certainly would not have found the General Staff. And where was there anything to indicate that they should inspect Number 14 Bendlerstrasse?

There, too, they would naturally not have found the General Staff. They would have found only the *Allgemeine Truppenamt*. But they might have discovered that the *Allgemeine Truppenamt* happened to be organized just like the General Staff. There were exactly the same number of departments. The Operations Department was now called simply Army Department. The Central Department was now called Army Personnel Department. The Foreign Armies Department was now the Military Statistics Department.

If the members of the commission had gone through the many offices of the *Allgemeine Truppenamt* they would have found to their astonishment that the entire map room of the Greater General Staff, with all its plans, archives, and hundreds of thousand of maps, had been moved intact to these offices. And had they given the matter a little thought, they might have concluded that tanks and planes are not so important because they age and depreciate; but that archives, surveys, intelligence reports age much more slowly. Perhaps it would have been more to the point to allow the Germans their planes and machine guns, and to see to it that the General Staff really disappeared. But no one disturbed the men who worked in Bendlerstrasse 14. And they really worked. They could not, as in former days, set themselves apart by their crimson collars and braid. They could not openly show their contempt for lesser beings. Indeed, they had to conceal the very fact of their existence as a group. But that did not matter. For there was much work to be done. The experiences of World War I had to be studied. All plans must be revised. The invention of tanks, planes, and poison gas had revolutionized the war of the future. They could

not begin soon enough to strike outmoded ideas out of the old plans and in their stead make new plans, based on the potentialities of modern weapons.

Staff Officer IA had more work than ever before. And he did it.

## WHAT'S IN A GENERAL?

### I

ON March 23, 1921, the following clause was adopted as Paragraph 36 of the Defense Law:

"Soldiers may not engage in political activity. While on duty such activity is also forbidden to military officials. Soldiers are forbidden to belong to political clubs or to participate in political meetings."

The man who had this clause adopted was Herr von Seeckt. Von Seeckt seized every other opportunity that came his way to prove that the Reichswehr was an unpolitical institution.

On June 30, 1924, he published the following decree:

"The exercise of executive power has brought most high officers of the Reichswehr into close contact with politics. But even as the possessor of executive power, the officer of the Reichswehr does not become a politician; he remains a soldier and in his new duties, though preserving his independence, he acts under orders of his superiors solely for the State as a whole; for he is the executive organ of the State and not of any Party or economic group."

This was phrased in unusually obscure and vague German. But that was probably intentional.

Seeckt wanted to appear unpolitical, but he had no intention of being unpolitical. This was true also of the Reichswehr he had built up.

The famous Kapp Putsch, the first attempt by the generals to overthrow the Republic and take power themselves, proves this statement.

The putsch took place in March, 1920. The troops who were on the point of revolt were about to march on Berlin; the



Republican Government did not know whether to flee Berlin or to depend upon the support of the troops that had remained loyal. Ebert and Noske asked Herr von Seeckt, the chief of the illegal General Staff, whether he stood behind the Government.

Herr von Seeckt then was far from unpolitical. He asked ironically whether the ministers wanted him to fight a battle at the Brandenburger Tor. "Soldiers do not fire upon soldiers," he declared in conclusion.

The Government, therefore, had to flee Berlin. Herr von Seeckt later refused to make common cause with the revolting officers, but that was all he did for the Republic.

The collapse of the Kapp Putsch, of which more will be told later, was not due to the work of Herr von Seeckt, but to the Berlin workers, who went out on a general strike. The rage of the great majority of the German people over the entire affair was so overwhelming that it was impossible to evade punishing the mutinous officers in some measure. But Herr von Seeckt played his cards so cleverly, negotiated and worked behind the scenes so skillfully, that nothing serious befell the rebels. In fact, General Reinhardt—then Chief of the Reichswehr and the only general who was really Republican at heart, the one general who had wanted to fire on the rebels—had to go. His place was taken by the man who had refused to put down the rebellion: Herr von Seeckt.

The generals had lost one battle, but they had gained important territory in their war against the Republic.

Something very similar took place in November, 1923, when Hitler and Ludendorff attempted a putsch in Munich, once more threatening the Republican regime. During the night of November 9, Ebert called a cabinet meeting and asked Herr von Seeckt: "Does the Reichswehr stand behind the Government?"

For a long moment Herr von Seeckt did not answer. His eyes coldly measured the uncomfortable ministers. Finally he

consented to reply: "The Reichswehr stands behind me, Mr. President."

The Reichswehr had, indeed, never stood behind the Republican Government. As later events proved, it also did not stand behind Herr von Seeckt. The Reichswehr stood behind the Reichswehr alone. Or, as General von Hammerstein-Equord, one of Seeckt's successors as head of the Reichswehr, declared in July, 1929: "During the period of the collapse and the Revolution, the German officer corps learned to distinguish between the State and the Form of the State and to serve the permanent identity of the State, even when it was leaderless."

Hammerstein and other generals spoke as though they had served the State. But what they really meant was that they had considered themselves the State. Or at least as a State within the State. That had been true since the Revolution. It had merely not been stated quite so openly at first. In the beginning, they had worked by stealing archives, setting up a Black Reichswehr, buying arms and murdering pacifists. Later, they came out into the open; they became more cynical.

There can be no doubt at all that the Reichswehr did not consider itself unpolitical. It merely thought it wiser to appear unpolitical. A year after Hitler's seizure of power Herr von Blomberg wrote in the *Voelkischer Beobachter* that the Reichswehr had deceived Germany's Republican governments, which it hated, and had conspired with their enemies. In order to conceal this, "impartiality was a necessary means. The Army was satisfied to save itself as a useful tool for the future."

The generals began early, as has been pointed out, to perfect this tool. A decisive step in this direction was the appointment of General Groener as Minister of Transportation in 1920.

The Allies, and France in particular, had insisted that the German railroads were to be placed under civil administration. The French recognized the tremendous role the railroads had played during the mobilization of 1914. In the forty-four peaceful years before the war, the German railroads had always been

prepared for the day of mobilization. That was why the railroads in Germany had to be more or less State controlled; that was why the network of lines was built, not from the viewpoint of profit or public need, but from the viewpoint of strategy. For forty-four years in the station master's room of every German railroad station there had stood a big black box with two locks and four lead weights. Once every year a military commission appeared unexpectedly at every German railroad station, opened the box in the presence of the station master, took out a large sheaf of paper and replaced it by another. Then the box was again locked and sealed again. The commission was sent out by the General Staff, of course. The papers contained the timetables for the first twelve days of mobilization.

This had all been the work of Groener during the years before the war. It was not by chance that in 1920 he became Minister of Transportation—that is, the man who supervised the entire German railroad system. It was a clever stroke on the part of the generals. With Groener in the saddle, they could be sure that military and strategic considerations would be given preference in the reconstruction of the German railroads. During the following years a great deal was made of the fact that Groener nipped all incipient railroad strikes in the bud. But something far more important was not mentioned; that he frustrated all efforts by industry to get the railroads—which theoretically were a private enterprise—under its control and away from State control.

When he resigned in August, 1923—to devote himself to military studies—the German railroads were once more securely in the hands and absolutely at the disposal of the German General Staff.

No, the Reichswehr was definitely a political body. Countless reports about regimental celebrations indicate to what extent this was true. It considered its foremost enemy the Republic. Poland came second; then followed France. In memorial speeches the representatives of the democratic regime were regularly attacked; the government was usually referred to as the

"Jew Government." Then the song: "*Siegreich wollen wir Frankreich schlagen*" ("We want to strike victoriously at France") was sung or played by the military bands and more speeches were made on how Poland would be beaten and France would yet be driven out of Alsace-Lorraine and brought to her knees.

Herr von Seeckt and the men around him undoubtedly did their best to create a warlike mood among the men in their "peacetime army." From 1923 on, they concerned themselves with the "political instruction of the troops." In an official publication of the Reichswehr we read: "... the High Command has not given enough consideration to the fact that the natural, matter-of-fact loyalty of the troops which was present in the monarchy is not present to the same degree today, and that soldiers must be charged with passionate nationalism in order to see the goal beyond all the hardships of their service, for the goal alone makes these hardships worth while."

Men like the espionage chief of World War I, Colonel Nicolai, and Colonel Hans von Voss, and Dr. Albrecht Blau, who later became very famous, set to work very early to prepare the troops psychologically for the next world war, or rather for the continuation of the World War. All this work was carried on within the framework of the illegal General Staff, the *Allgemeine Truppenamt*.

The generals had never been unpolitical, and they had never intended to make the Reichswehr a neutral, nonpartisan organization. Perhaps it would have been possible for the Republic to do this, if the Republican governments had gotten rid of the generals at once. But the Social Democrats and the Democrats were incapable of any sort of, decision or definite action in this regard. The French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1918 built their military machines from the ground up. They did not allow their opponents to obtain any sort of control over these machines. The German Social Democrats and the Democrats had every reason to follow these examples. But they did not. Consequently, the Reichswehr was

nothing more than a miniature edition of the Imperial Army. If possible it was more "reliable" from the generals' point of view than its predecessors. At a time when Germany had a socialist President and a socialist Premier, when the Social Democratic Party was by far the strongest party in Germany, Herr von Seeckt and his generals were able to refuse admission to the Reichswehr to members of the Social Democratic Party. In fact, even recruits whose fathers were members of this party were not admitted.

The Reichswehr was a perfect miniature of the Imperial Army, down to the smallest detail. Fundamentally, nothing had changed but its size. The Versailles Treaty at first allowed Seeckt seven infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions, and later another seven artillery regiments. Before the war the German Army had been divided into twenty-five army corps. Seeckt distributed his twenty-one infantry regiments and his seven artillery regiments throughout Germany, so that every single place was covered where one of the twenty-five army corps had once had its headquarters. The old Imperial Army corps were usually each divided into twelve infantry regiments. Seeckt divided every Reichswehr regiment into twelve companies and placed these companies in the garrisons or barracks formerly occupied by regiments.

Anyone could see that he never considered his army of one hundred thousand men as anything definite and final—and incidentally it never quite got down to one hundred thousand men; small deceptions here and there helped raise the number. The Reichswehr he had built up was no more than a cadre for a future, greater army.

As a matter of fact, he more or less admitted as much, even while he was still head of the illegal General Staff. In his book published in 1920, *Leadership and Combat of the Combined Arms*, he wrote: "Although the Germans today have an army of only one hundred thousand men, these rules are meant for the millions of the great German army."

That was why it was important to him that no "unreliable"

elements entered the Reichswehr. That was why Herr von Seeckt removed all officers with any Republican leanings. His officers were to be a guarantee of the future.

What kind of officers could be such a guarantee? Those men, of course, who thought as the generals did. Men who were born and reared as they were. The members of their caste, the representatives of the Prussian military caste. This is true, despite Herr von Seeckt's assertion (in a series of articles entitled "Thoughts of a Soldier," published in 1929) that "there never was a military caste in Germany."

That was a lie. In the Reichswehr he built up, more than sixty per cent of the officers were Junkers from Pomerania, Silesia, and East Prussia—or rather, as all these districts together are called in Germany, *Ostelbien* (East Elbia). More than sixty per cent of the officers came from a population group of only thirteen thousand, including women and children.

That was the military caste.

## 2

Just what is the German military caste? Just what kind of people were these generals? Why is it that they all look alike? Why do they all think alike? Why do they all hate or love the same things? What are they like? What have they become? Why did they have to become what they are?

If we were to examine their biographies—the biographies of these von Seeckts, von Bocks, von Fritches, von Reichenaus, von Brauchitsches—if we were to follow the life of each one of them, we would be disappointed. In spite of wars, revolutions, and counter-revolutions, these are strangely monotonous, colorless, passionless lives. A few dates, nothing more. A few names—cadet school—military academy—such-and-such a regiment—such-and-such an army corps—such-and-such a position on the General Staff—that is all. We must read *all* their biographies, we must cut out a cross-section of all these lives, in order to grasp the special meaning that lies behind all these sober and

apparently uneventual existences; in order to understand the kind of people they are, why they are what they are, and why they could not be anything else.

At the beginning and the end of all these lives we find *Ostelbien*—the part of Germany that lies to the East of the Elbe, that consists of Mecklenburg, Pomerania, East Prussia, and Silesia. *Ostelbien* is their cradle; *Ostelbien* gave them their mother's milk.

Not all of them were born there, of course. For the most part they were the sons of generals or high officers, and their fathers lived somewhere in garrisons scattered all over Germany and there the children were born. But it is purely accidental that Gerd von Rundstedt was born in Aschersleben in Saxony, where his father was a general in the garrison, for the Rundstedts came from Mecklenburg. It is accidental that Herr von Reichenau was born in Karlsruhe. His mother, Countess Maltzan, came from Silesia. Accidental that Herr von Brauchitsch was born in Berlin. The Brauchitsch estate of Fretsdorf is situated in East Prussia. These von Brauchitsches, von Rundstedts, von Bocks, von Kleists, von Stuelpnagels could have been born in Rio de Janeiro or in New York; but their true birth-place remains *Ostelbien*. Without it they are incomprehensible, without it they could not be explained.

Some say that there is no difference between the land to the right and to the left of the Elbe, that all this land is German. It is true there is no officially recognized province of *Ostelbien*. It is, so to speak, a secret province. The real features of this province are described in no Baedeker. No explorer has ever penetrated to its farthest reaches. Perhaps that is because people in *Ostelbien* are not the talkative type.

If you cross the Elbe from the west or southwest into Mark Brandenburg or Lausitz, or if you enter Mecklenburg from the northwest, across the border of Holstein, you see nothing but fields, meadows, woods, and villages. But the fields are divided differently, the woods have different foliage.

In the forests range great numbers of stag and elk. In the

fields are bustards—large, ostrich-like birds that are extinct almost everywhere else in the world. On the Pomeranian lakes are wild swans. There are cormorants, herons, ospreys—birds that are scarcely met with any more in the rest of Germany.

And in the villages you find not only peasants but landowners and farm workers—men divided into class divisions which are nowhere in the world so sharp, unless it be in the Poland that was, or Hungary. Somehow these people are different from other Germans. Perhaps that is because of the Slavic blood that flows in their veins.

The people—only the landowners are real people. All others are just natives.

The people are divided into three classes: "*Lackstiefel, Wicbstiefel, Schmierstiefel*" (shoes of patent leather, calf, cowhide)—to use the phrase of a German reporter, Erwin Topf. The *Schmierstiefel*—that means the farm workers. Their relationship to the landowner is on a patriarchal basis. They kiss their master's sleeve or the hem of his coat. Before they enter the master's house they take off their shoes and their caps.

Even today it sometimes happens that before the marriage of a servant the bride must pay a nocturnal visit to the landowner. Illegitimate children resulting from relations between servant girls and their masters are far from rare—even today.

Half the land, which comprises three-fifths of the total land under cultivation in Germany, is in the hands of the great landowners. Estates of 50,000 acres and 75,000 acres are by no means unusual. The total land owned by the German nobility amounts to 13,750,000 acres. But most of these landowning families are debt-ridden—have been so for fifty years and more.

Then there are the castles. Broad, massive façades, two and three stories high, eighteen or twenty rooms in size. Long brick corridors. Tremendously broad, high rooms that in the winter are never quite warmed by the tile stoves. Shapeless crystal chandeliers hanging from the ceiling; life-size portraits of ancestors on the walls. All around the building splendid parks



with ancient trees, brooks that flow through tiny lakes. From the master's home the servants quarters, the stables, and the manure pit can be seen. The landowners like to see what their men and maid servants are doing. They don't quite trust them.

There is the hunt. This is one of the most important activities in the lives of the great landowners. In spring it begins with woodcock and grouse. Then come deer and duck hunting. Then partridge shooting. Then pheasants. And then, from November to mid-January, the battue, in which all the men gather to beat the woods for game.

What do the East Elbians think of the world? They don't think much of it. For them *Ostelbien* is the center of the world. They don't even think very much of Germany. They don't trust the South Germans or the West Germans.

They are conservative, militaristic, anti-social, and above all they want to preserve their position of power in the nation. Democracy has no meaning for them. If we were all equally wealthy, we would all be equally poor, they say.

Elections? That is an affair of the clique. When election day approaches, the oldest *Landrat* (councilor) calls the Junkers together. They agree on a candidate—one of themselves, of course. The candidate makes a number of public speeches. The candidate is, most important of all, for high tariffs, assuring them good prices for their rye, for their butter, for their cattle. Indeed, their candidates have seen to it that Germany during the last fifty years or so spent hundreds of millions of taxpayers' money to support *Ostelbien* in such a way. Other political parties were not even permitted to hold open meetings in *Ostelbien*. A landlord who allows his place to be used by another party is boycotted. On election day the farm workers are handed a voting slip—for the Conservative Party, of course. The other parties have no opportunity to distribute their voting slips.

It was like that in 1860, in 1880, and it was still like that in 1920 and 1930. That is how the von Rundstedts, the von Kleists, the von Fritches, the von Stuelpnagels, and the von Reichenaus grew up.

Their first memories were the maneuvers which were held in the region every few years. There were uniforms, military music, horses, cannon, and a great many generals and lieutenants. When the maneuvers were over, the boys still had their tin soldiers. They fired small shot from brass cannon, managed whole campaigns on the floor of the nursery. Occasionally their fathers helped. Their fathers liked to see this kind of play; it was good preparation. For, naturally, the boys would enter the Army; there was never any question about that. The East Elbian noble families had been serving in the same regiments for hundreds of years—*their* regiments. "What can man desire more than to become Kaiser, Pope, or the first cuirassier of Koenigsberg?" They looked down even on the Imperial Guard Cavalry. That was a Hohenzollern institution; that was something new; that was something for parvenus.

This was how the von Stuelpnagels, von Brauchitsches, von Rundstedts, von Reichenaus, von Bocks grew up. And then they entered the cadet school—usually the cadet school at Lichterfelde. The education of a professional soldier has to start earlier than the education for practically any other profession. There are, therefore, military schools all over the world. The idea of such schools is beautiful and romantic, the practice seldom is. It certainly was not in Lichterfelde.

Even the preparatory school which the boys entered at the age of ten was permeated by a purely military spirit. The pupils were systematically taught to consider a civilian a contemptible, sub-human creature. "There are soldiers and there are swine." The quality of the instruction was on a low level when it was not given by civilian teachers, and civilian teachers were not respected. The only interesting hour was the religion period. Here the pupils took up Bibles in which many generations of cadets had already marked out every page that contained anything erotic. And then they read. For the rest, they learned to swim, to dance, and to ride.

Sexual perversions were frequently practiced. The boys slept together, the teachers slept with the boys. Occasionally there

were scandals and suicides, and then a few teachers would be sent away or the head of a cadet school would be dismissed. But in a short time everything would return to its old course. The punishments were terrible for those who refused to co-operate. And even without provocation the older cadets conceived of frightful torments for the younger cadets. At the slightest so-called infraction of the written and unwritten laws, a dozen cadets would fall upon one and sometimes seriously injure him with riding whips and even knives. One punishment often applied consisted of a cadet having a button sewn to his cheek. If a boy showed that he was in pain or tried to defend himself, he was a coward.

Cadet schools in many countries are a bit like that. There is perversion, there is cruelty. But the Prussian cadet schools were much more so than any other cadet school. They had a deep effect on all the boys who went through them, an effect that stayed with them all their lives.

Lichterfelde was not so much a prep school for the Army as for war. Anyone who had passed through it was no longer fit for a normal, peaceful life. Intellectual interests were systematically suppressed and killed off.

Then the Army. Some garrison and then, after a short while, the young officers were detailed to the Military Academy. Not all the young officers, of course. Only those who showed some promise, only those who were to be called later to the General Staff; and needless to say, most of those young officers called to the Military Academy came from those East Elbian families.

There was a system in calling them away so early. The High Command (or to be precise, the Military Cabinet during the reign of the Hohenzollerns) did not want men on the General Staff and in important positions of command who had used up their strength during many years of petty detail work in garrisons. They wanted relatively young men.

The von Stuelpnagels, von Brauchitsches, von Rundstedts, von Bocks, von Fritches, and von Kleists all went to the Military Academy in the Dorotheenstrasse in Berlin. A gloomy

building of red brick, half high school, half university. Here they learned geography, history, mathematics, French, English, Russian. And, of course, tactics, strategy, military history. Besides this there was General Staff duty—a kind of seminar on warfare which included practical work.

The young officers were detailed to the Military Academy for five years. The first three years were devoted mainly to military matters, the last two to “the competitive struggle for acceptance by the General Staff.”

Every year on the memorial day for Frederick the Great, the Kaiser would visit the academy. There would be a lecture on Frederick and then the Kaiser would depart. The young officers did not like the Kaiser. They went to Court only when it could not be avoided. They preferred to get their amusements in other places.

Until the end of World War I, four hundred young officers were appointed every year to the Military Academy. These four hundred provided what we may call the raw material for the General Staff.

The young officers who, after going through the Military Academy, were assigned to the General Staff were returned to their regiments at regular intervals. There they remained for a time, were promoted, were again detailed to the General Staff, and then again returned to their troops. This went on for many years. They advanced in the hierarchy, learned to know the various departments of the General Staff, became acquainted with all General Staff officers, and at the same time kept up a certain contact with the active troops.

Everyone was envious of them. They were considered “something special,” men of a finer quality than the average, and before World War I they were actually glorified as “modern knights.” A great deal was made of their profound sense of duty and honor, and of their inborn aristocracy. Their excellent manners and their worldly appearance were praised to the skies. But this was largely legend; their manners were not of the best and they were far from men of the world. With few ex-

ceptions they lacked completely the elegance, the self-assurance, and the charm of Austrian, French, or Italian officers. In the ballroom and in society they never appeared quite at ease. They always preferred small night clubs with rather unsavory reputations, where they could let themselves go. They liked to drink, though they never drank more than was good for them. They could take plenty. Perhaps these traits stemmed from their East Elbian blood.

And then there were women—

There is an extensive literature on the Prussian officer as a romantic lover, but it is all fictional. Their duties were too strenuous; they had never had a chance to learn the art of conversation, let alone the art of seduction by conversation. Consequently, they did not set their caps too high. They depended upon the magic effect of uniforms on the hearts of uncomplicated and easily accessible ladies. They had affairs with minor actresses, with night club singers, with dancers in the royal ballet. Or, if even these proved too complex, they simply went to prostitutes.

When they were with their regiments, perhaps in some small town, they usually had an affair with some married woman who was the wife of a businessman—that is, a sub-human. But that sort of thing ended with their lieutenancy; the higher officers never bothered. The fact is, many of the officers never got over their experiences at cadet school, or else they were homosexual by nature. In any case, the percentage of perverts in the German General Staff and among the German officers corps in general was abnormally high.

Nevertheless, all or almost all of them finally married. They usually married the daughters of older officers; that is, they more or less remained in the family. The women associated only with one another, and although they did not go so far as to give each other military salutes, they always observed military protocol at their teas and *Kaffeeklatsches*. After all, the wife of a general was more important than the wife of a colonel. Sometimes, indeed, it happened that the young officers did not marry “within the family.” To revive a failing bank account,

it often happened that an officer would marry some pretty young Jewish girl from a rich house. The Court rather welcomed this. The East Elbian gentry did not welcome it, but they had to swallow it and in time got used to it.

Interestingly enough, the wives of these officers, though they came from the same environment, were usually far superior to their men. They were more experienced in the ways of the world; they were more flexible; they had read books; they knew human beings. They were people one could talk to.

Then there were the casinos. There were, of course, casinos everywhere in Germany where there were officers. In Berlin and other big cities the casinos did not play any part to speak of in the lives of the officers. But they certainly played a big part in the little garrisons where they were the only possible places an officer could go to after his day's work was done. Then, too, the officers in small garrisons were much more numerous than in the few big cities and they were also perhaps more representative because they were average.

Civilians, who were not permitted to enter the officers' casinos, imagined them to be something marvelously amusing. But with extremely few exceptions, the German officers' casino was merely an eating place where the food most of the time was not even good. The prevailing atmosphere was one of complacent dullness when the officers got on well with one another. They had to get on with one another because they spent so much of their time together. With the exception of monks, there is probably no group of human beings who remained so completely isolated and among themselves as the officers in the casino. As a result, they gradually arrived at the point where they had nothing more to say to one another. For years they had said the same thing over and over; now they simply kept quiet. And they began to drink.

The casinos in the garrison towns were the external evidence of how completely set apart these officers were—a caste by themselves. And they deliberately set themselves apart from the others, from the "damned civilians." Those in authority did not

want the officers to be in contact with the civilian population. And the Kaiser did not want it. They wanted to create a wide breach between the two, and to maintain that breach. For only if the officers never met civilians could they continue to believe that they were the most aristocratic class, that they were better than civilians.

And so they sat in their casinos, seldom opened their mouths, because they had already said everything they had to say, did not listen to what their comrades said because they had heard it all a hundred times before, and drank. Those who remained for long in the small garrisons aged quickly and soon became incapable of any sort of strenuous work. And then came their pensions.

For the rest? There was little else. The rulers in Berlin did not encourage intellectual activity in the Army. And most of the officers themselves were against it. They scarcely read the newspapers; they did not know what was going on in the world. Books they did not even consider. Hindenburg wrote in his memoirs that since his cadet days he read nothing but military books.

In Berlin itself, on the Greater General Staff, things were a little different. Here sat officers who could read, and a few who could even write. Indeed, the German officers, especially those of the pre-Wilhelmine epoch, developed something that may be called the Prussian Style. It was excellent German: brief, clear, precise, without bombast or nonessential elaborateness.

Those on the General Staff had some diversions and some change. The von Rundstedts, von Brauchitsches, von Reichenaus, and von Fritches at least had their maneuvers and their General Staff tours.

The maneuvers gave the members of the General Staff an opportunity to see how their calculations worked out in reality. The annual maneuvers took place in the fall, after the harvest, so that as little damage as possible would be done to crops.

The Staff of a particular army corps prepared the maneuvers. That is, it worked out a military situation in which the divisions

on both sides were assigned specific tasks. In these maneuvers, only the Staff members attached to the particular corps and divisions participated. The Greater General Staff as a whole participated only in the Imperial Maneuvers which were so costly that they took place only every two years.

At these maneuvers the Kaiser was supposed to act only as an observer. But Wilhelm II often took over a command of his own, very much to the annoyance of his generals. The layout for the Imperial Maneuvers was prepared by the General Staff; the Chief of the General Staff himself made the critique.

The ordinary maneuvers and the the Imperial Maneuvers had a political as well as a military purpose. They helped make the Army popular with the civilian population and with the Army reservists. The romantic side of the soldier's life was always stressed.

After the maneuvers came the General Staff tour. The Chief of the General Staff, accompanied by some twelve members of the Staff, traveled through Germany to one of the frontiers. Every Staff member was given a chance to go on such a tour. Every one of them went at least once, and for each of them this tour was "his finest memory."

They traveled to Silesia or East Prussia or Alsace and examined the countryside in which the deployment and the first operations of the coming war were to take place. In the evening they would dine together, drink wine, talk and tell stories.

And that was all there was to it.

### 3

There were some other things that were done or not done. The Prussian officer caste despised manual labor. They did not carry packages. They did nothing with their hands except shake hands with fellow officers or salute. They did not even talk with their hands. They did not smoke cigarettes down to the end and never relit a cigarette. They never went anywhere without gloves. They kissed the hands of married ladies. They



did not ride third class on trains. They did not let their hair grow too long. They lived on their salaries, borrowed money perhaps, sometimes won at cards, but they never engaged in business. They did not wear glasses. That was unmilitary. They wore a monocle.

And they had no private life.

Private life in the bourgeois sense of the word did not exist for the average German officer. Music, the theater, other people, books, contemporary problems—all these things did not exist for him. His only concerns were other officers and military problems.

This surrender of their private lives was not altogether as voluntary as it may have seemed. To a large degree they were simply shut off from all the things that private life means to other men. Workers and factory managers, doctors and lawyers, all had fixed hours of work; and after hours their time was their own. Officers had no fixed hours. Officers were never off duty, and, therefore, as long as they were officers they were excluded from ordinary modes of living for the full twenty-four hours of the day. A factory manager did not care what his employees did outside working hours; but a general had to concern himself about what his men did. He had to care what his officers did and what they thought every hour of the day. This was their life. And there was nothing outside this life.

The results, as the years passed and officers rose higher in the ranks, were a more and more limited one-sidedness, an increasing alienation from the world, a more radical sacrifice of human values. The inevitable result was that nothing was left in their lives of the things that make life worth while for the rest of humanity.

As the years passed, their lives were caught inescapably in an almost complete isolation and in a conflict with a reality they no longer knew, whose changing demands they could no longer comprehend. In the end they became dignified, stern, and rather ridiculous figures, strongly reminiscent of Don Quixote. With tremendous zeal these generals seemed to be devoting their ut-

most strength to warring against windmills. Living in their own world, they grasped none of the changes that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had brought about, and they heroically braced themselves to hold back the rising tide of history.

But the world that smiled at the quaint figures they cut did not realize that before the tide of history swept over them and their outmoded ideals, these Quixotes would wreak far more destruction than did Don Quixote in his battle against the windmills.

For the feelings that guided these Quixotes had nothing to do with the noble chivalry that impelled the Spaniard to adventure. Furthermore, their form of militarism was more than the mere desire to keep themselves and the rest of the people strong and fit to defend their land. Their militarism was a fixed idea that the soldier, that is to say themselves, must become not only the first citizen of Germany but of the whole world—the whole world which Germany would conquer. Those who glorified these officers spoke of their sense of duty and their willingness to sacrifice. But their true motives were ambition and lust for power.

Many of these things were not understood in Germany and certainly not in the world. But one thing everyone did understand: these men knew their trade.

The Prussian Army was the only fruit the impoverished Prussian land had brought forth. Count Honoré de Mirabeau, the French Ambassador to Prussia in 1787, once wrote that the Army was Prussia's only industry. What was true about this *bon mot* was the fact that other countries established armies after they had produced other things, after they had accumulated wealth and capital. With Prussia the order was reversed. There was little reason to protect the sandy soil of Prussia, because nobody wanted it. The soil yielded little. There was no industry, there was no wealth. How could Prussia achieve anything in world politics? What had she to offer? Nothing but the Army. Their conclusion was to the point: either the Army would be

able to make something of Prussia, or Prussia would never become anything.

When Frederick the Great's ambassador to London asked for more money, saying that he alone of all the diplomats had to ride to Court in a shabby carriage, the King replied: "Tell those people that two hundred thousand men are marching before thee."

Thus it began. Those two hundred thousand men have not yet stopped marching.

True, these men who have been marching steadily since the days of Frederick the Great, this gentry from *Ostelbien*, these generals, are somewhat strange, a little ridiculous, a bit unworldly. No one knew that better than the German populace. Satirical magazines fattened themselves for generations on the Prussian Lieutenant. Cartoonists devoted their talents to jokes about his ignorance, his arrogance—some of the classic cartoons of Germany deal with him. For more than a hundred years the entire middle class of Germany made fun of the Prussian officer. The bourgeois of Berlin were never so pleased as in 1806, after Napoleon had defeated the Prussian Army at Jena and Auerstaedt. They were pleased that the arrogant gentlemen of guard had at last been taken down a notch or two.

But in the end the Germans agreed with Bismarck: "No one can imitate our Prussian Lieutenant."

Why were they forgiven in the end, when they were so hated and laughed at? Why did the people allow these men to command and insult them? Because these insufferably ambitious and utterly amoral men, these arrogant, ridiculous, criminal, stupid officers could do one thing.

They could sacrifice a man's most important possession: His life. They could die. This was really the only thing they had learned to do well.

#### 4

These, then, were the von Brauchitsches, von Rumpstedts, von Bocks, von Fritches, von Seeckts, and all the rest. This was

what they were like. This was how they thought and felt. It was in their blood. It was what kept them alive, supported them during a time in which they were really anachronisms. This made it possible for them to hurl the world back into the Middle Ages, even if only for a short while. All these things were necessary. Without *Ostelbien*, without the cadet schools, without the Greater General Staff in Berlin and the dismal casinos in the provinces, they would not have been what they were. But by these things they had retained their characteristics—the von Rundstedts, von Bocks, and von Seeckts; by these things they had maintained themselves in the twentieth century.

As has been pointed out, under the Treaty of Versailles Herr von Seeckt had received permission for an army of only one hundred thousand men. After trying and failing to have this figure increased, he had come out in numerous publications against compulsory military service and against a large army. Through articles and lectures he sought to prove that "the goal of modern strategy must be to win decisions by the use of mobile, highly efficient forces, either without setting the masses in motion, or before the masses are set in motion." Essentially, this was the same conception of the army of the future as that of the French officer, Charles de Gaulle.

Seeckt was accused of taking this position only to deceive the world as to his real intention of converting the small German cadre army into a mass army. This charge was both true and untrue. He was actually attempting a deception. But on the other hand, there is no doubt that he was fundamentally more in favor of a small standing army than compulsory military service.

Both he and the other East Elbian generals.

A small professional army meant the handing over of the defense of the country to a military caste. This meant, in the final analysis, a restoration of the heritage of Frederick the Great.

Frederick Wilhelm I, the real creator of the Prussian Army, had occasionally tried to limit what he considered the harmful influence of the Junkers within the Army. His son, Frederick

II, again turned the Army over completely to the Junkers. "At the present time our officers are drawn from the nobility. If we . . . must take them from the middle classes, it would be the first step toward the downfall and decay of the Army." He did not think much of his noble officers, but he thought even less of those who came from the bourgeoisie. He believed that since the nobility had spilled blood for the Army, that blood must be compensated for by the nobility's administering the Army.

The fact that a hundred and fifty years had passed since the days of Frederick the Great meant nothing to the East Elbians. That was no reason to change the basic principle. For them, universal military service was really no more than a successor to the *levée en masse* of the French Revolution. The *levée en masse* meant that the defense of the country was no longer the prerogative of the military caste, but the duty—or rather the privilege—of every citizen. The principle of compulsory military service would in the end lead to the disappearance of the prerogatives of the military caste.

Therefore, when von Seeckt talked about a small standing army, he sincerely meant it. But when he pretended he was for it for strategic and tactical reasons—like de Gaulle—he lied. For he knew very well that he could not make war with a small army, whether it consisted of one hundred thousand men—as prescribed by the Treaty of Versailles—or two hundred thousand, the number von Seeckt eventually had in his Reichswehr, or four hundred thousand—the number he had originally demanded. The very nature of the new technical weapons—tanks and planes—made it necessary to include technicians in the Army. This meant an element of the population that was wholly alien to the military caste and—it must be admitted—hated by it. Seeckt was the first to recognize that he would have to depend upon bourgeois officers for the technical arms. Officers of the military class simply could not be trained in technical matters. He knew, too, that in the event of war he could not do without a human reservoir of sixty millions. And because he recognized this he built up his cadre army. So, in the last analysis, every-

thing that was said in Germany about a small standing army, up to shortly before the introduction of conscription, may be considered a deliberate attempt to deceive the world. Perhaps it made Seeckt and many of his friends unhappy to see the introduction of compulsory military service approach. But even so, they did everything they could to hasten it.

In 1935, two years after Hitler's seizure of power, the time came. Seeckt lived to see it. A year later he died.

Seeckt had left his post as chief of the Reichswehr ten years before. His fall was due to a ridiculous little mistake. Yes, even Herr von Seeckt could make mistakes. This extraordinarily clever and cynical man, who had played his cards so skillfully against the Republic and who seemed to know exactly how far he could go, finally committed the fatal error. He became overconfident. He had quite overlooked the fact that in 1926 there were still people in Germany who dared to speak out, and that there were still some who had not forgotten that the Kaiser had been dethroned in 1918.

He had quite forgotten this, and so it happened that he allowed the eldest son of the former Crown Prince, Prince Wilhelm, to take part in Reichswehr maneuvers dressed in the uniform of the Imperial German Army. He even surrounded him with officers, and finally an honor guard accompanied the Prince to the Hohenzollern Castle.

The newspapers made a tremendous outcry; the Reichswehr Minister declared he had known nothing of the whole affair. Herr von Seeckt shrugged. Yes, he admitted, he had arranged it and he didn't see why people should get excited because the successor to the throne of the Hohenzollerns took part in the maneuvers of the Republican Army and was surrounded by a guard of honor. He declared that the former Crown Princess had asked him this favor and he had been glad to accommodate her. He did not, however, tell the whole truth. He shielded someone, the man who was really the guilty one in the affair.

Perhaps it would have been possible to retain Seeckt, as far as the reaction in Germany was concerned. But Foreign Minister

Gustav Stresemann, who was trying desperately to reach an accord with the former Allies, declared that if Seeckt remained as head of the Reichswehr the effect on Germany's foreign relations would be catastrophic.

Within the Reichswehr, too, someone suddenly demanded that Seeckt resign. This was the energetic Colonel Kurt von Schleicher, who had been busy building a great career for himself. The pressure was too strong for Seeckt to resist. He resigned and was replaced by Colonel General Wilhelm Heye.

A little later Seeckt went to China. Just what he did there has never been altogether clear. Military adviser? Instructor? Observer for the German General Staff? There was also talk about some questionable business deals—arms traffic, to be exact. In any case, Seeckt remained in the background. When he returned to Germany he tried to take part in politics outside the Reichswehr. He was nominated for the Reichstag, but lost the election. In October, 1931, when the Presidential election was held—with Hindenburg and Hitler as candidates—he spoke publicly against Hindenburg. Some people suspected that Seeckt himself had ambitions for the Presidency. This may have been so. But the real reason for Seeckt's bitterness toward the old president was much more tangible. It had been Hindenburg who had been the man behind the affair of Prince Wilhelm. It was he who had asked Seeckt to escort the young Hohenzollern to the maneuvers. It was he whom Seeckt had shielded and it was he who did not dream of standing by von Seeckt when the scandal broke.

Von Seeckt had become old and embittered, and he remained obscure even after Hitler became Chancellor and the Reichswehr Seeckt had created became more prominent than ever. He lived most of the time in Baden-Baden, a South German spa, where he had retired with his old, crippled wife, the only person in the world with whom he had any human relations and whom he treated gently, even pathetically gently. It is said that from 1933 to 1936 he was occasionally consulted by the General Staff, and shortly before his sudden death he was feted on the occasion of

the solemn reopening of the Military Academy, which had been closed by the Versailles Treaty. He received another title and honorary command of a regiment. But all this certainly could not have deceived him. The man who had reconstructed the Germany Army, the man whom Hitler had to thank for giving him at least a half-armed Germany—this man was forgotten when the new ruler rose to power.

## 5

However, the man who had stabbed him in the back, the man from his own ranks who finally dealt him the decisive blow, did not even live to see that day. He had died earlier, a sudden and considerably more dramatic death than von Seeckt's.

General Kurt von Schleicher, in 1926, was—and was to be for a long time to come—a man of whom the public knew almost nothing. What he did, what he was, what views he held, were not known. All that was known was that he was in the Reichswehr Ministry, and it was whispered that he had much more to say there than his position indicated. Probably this rumor was true.

Von Schleicher was a man people turned around to look at twice. He was slender, and very tall, and he was completely bald. He had the hard, set mouth of all the generals; a more intelligent and even more impenetrable face than most of his comrades; and he had greenish, glittering eyes that never looked straight at you. He was elegant, a man of the world; and he had an exceptionally beautiful, charming, and clever wife.

He was comparatively young. Born in 1882, he came from an ancient family of the Westphalian nobility. His family estate, Brodhagen, was situated in the vicinity of Bielefeld. As a young officer his rise had been swift. He was clever, witty, and gifted. And he had something very rare in a member of the military caste—a talent for politics. As a first lieutenant he had met Oscar von Hindenburg, the insignificant son of the great general. At that time—1911—the general had already been pensioned off.



About that time, Groener took young Schleicher into the Greater General Staff. Groener had early recognized the young man's talents, and during the following years he thought so much of him that he always referred to Schleicher as his "adopted son."

During the war the High Command assigned Schleicher a job that suited him perfectly; he worked in a field that remained his favorite for the rest of his life. He became a political observer. His field was the morale at home and in the camps of Germany's allies.

In the Reichswehr Ministry after the war, he remained as political observer. He served largely as a liaison man between the Army, the Reichswehr, and politicians in general. It was his job to find out how the various political parties stood with regard to the Reichswehr and its plans. His job was to try to stifle opposition to Army projects before it could get organized. He had to make explanations, smooth over difficulties, negotiate and arrange. He was rather obscure; he always worked in the shadow of the Reichswehr Ministry, but he knew his special field perfectly and therefore was irreplaceable. He was needed, and he was extremely influential.

Since he was the only general who understood anything about internal German politics and who had at his fingertips the currents that were prevalent, he was in a particularly strong position in 1923 and 1924. In those years Germany was practically under martial law—at least martial law was in effect in one province or another all the time. Schleicher, the liaison man between the governing Reichswehr and the civil authorities, was virtual ruler of the country. But only a few people knew it. Schleicher sat in his office and sent out his men to act for him, and the general public at the time did not even know his name.

He knew how to remain in the background; he preferred working in obscurity. He held many strings in his hands. He could make or break generals. He broke Seeckt—and anyone who knew Schleicher realized that the reason he did so was his own ambition. Sooner or later he hoped to take Seeckt's place.

Schleicher was ambitious, but he was patient; he had strong nerves and plenty of time.

In 1925 he decided not to break his friends in the Koenigsberg Command. In Koenigsberg the officers had entered into a peculiar conspiracy. They wanted nothing more nor less than a war against Poland. They had obtained money by selling their weapons to foreign powers and then having the arms they had sold replaced by Berlin. The Lithuanian Army in particular was a very good customer for the secondhand weapons from Koenigsberg. Later the officers did not content themselves with selling arms alone; they sold the entire fire-extinguishing apparatus of the Fortress of Pillau—an extremely complicated affair—to a South American country. It was all rather comic opera, but it was also a big scandal, for it cost the Republic and the German taxpayers huge sums of money. But because friends of Schleicher were involved, it was all hushed up.

General von Schleicher had his office on the first floor of the east wing of the Reichswehr Ministry, next to the Chief of the Ministerial Office and the Chief of the Defense Department. It consisted of some five rooms. In a nearby suite worked Colonel von Bredow, one of the heads of German military espionage, who was wholly under the thumb of Schleicher. In another room sat Captain Eugen Ott, perhaps Schleicher's most dangerous enemy—a man who early tied up with the Nazis and reported everything to them that went on around Schleicher. (Ott is today German Ambassador to Tokyo.) There was also Erwin Planck, son of the Nobel Prize physicist. He was Schleicher's private secretary until his chief lent him to Chancellor Bruening, undoubtedly to spy on the Chancellor for Schleicher. For Herr von Schleicher was an expert at intrigue. He played off everyone against everyone else and for a long time he succeeded. He sat in the background and let his marionettes dance. He was a marvelous talker and could confuse his worst enemies in conversations.

Since Hindenburg had become President he was a constant guest at Number 71 Wilhelmstrasse. The old Field Marshal was

charmed by Schleicher. He liked his way of talking, respected his beliefs, was delighted by Schleicher's declaration that he was a monarchist, and laughed at all Schleicher's jokes.

Some people in Army circles prophesied a great future for Herr von Schleicher. Others declared it would all turn out badly—a Prussian general who engaged in politics could not help coming to a bad end.

Both groups proved to be right, as we shall see later.

## 6

Besides the fall of Seeckt, another important event took place in 1926. This was the enlargement and the further camouflaging of the General Staff.

The General Staff had been forbidden under the Treaty of Versailles. The Treaty of Versailles was now some seven years old. But during those seven years the General Staff had survived as the *Allgemeine Truppenamt* of the Reichswehr Ministry.

Now it could not go on that way any more. Not because the French or the British Governments were protesting. They had long since given up protesting. It could not go on for the simple reason that the General Staff was now growing far too big. There was too much work, too many men were needed, too much money was used to enable it to go on working in the limited space of the Reichswehr Ministry and on the limited budget of the Reichswehr Ministry.

General von Schleicher and some of his friends had a grand new idea. They founded the *Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Wehrpolitik und Wehrwissenschaften* (The German Society for Military Politics and Military Sciences. What it actually was the general public was never informed. After all, it was nobody's business. The society was a private enterprise. Perhaps it was an organization doing research in science or military science. The fact that the society was financed by eight hundred German industrial firms, mainly by the steel industry, would seem to

lead to this conclusion. The annual contributions from the industry were enormous. The figures ran well into the millions. Nor were the contributions voluntary—not at first, anyway. But the Reichswehr soon made the captains of industry understand that it would be a mistake to try to pinch pennies where such an undertaking was concerned. For this society comprised the larger part of the General Staff, which now once more had enough room, enough help, and enough money to prepare all the things that had to be prepared and to do all the organizing that had to be done.

The former Allies, who naturally were kept informed by their intelligence departments, could scarcely have been surprised. Only a year before the foundation of the German Society for Military Politics and Military Sciences, Reichswehr Minister Otto Gessler had smilingly declared: "As far as I know, there is no clause in the Peace Treaty which forbids us to reconstitute the General Staff in the form of a corporation with limited liability."

The rest of the story of the General Staff is not so romantic. The so-called Society administered the business of the General Staff in conjunction with the *Allgemeine Truppenamt* of the Reichswehr Ministry until the day Adolf Hitler marched into the Rhineland and there was no longer any reason for concealment. On November 15, 1935, the General Staff was proclaimed reconstituted. A world that was none too surprised to learn that the Staff was headed by Ludwig Beck, who until then had been Chief of the *Allgemeine Truppenamt*, that is, he had actually been Chief of the General Staff long before he received the official title.

The German Society for Military Politics and Military Science continued to exist, but the real work of the General Staff was now concentrated in the Bendlerstrasse, where the Reichswehr Ministry had bought a number of adjoining buildings and remodeled them in order to make room for the Staff. For the General Staff was now bigger than ever before, both in the amount of space it took up and the number of tasks it had to

accomplish. The heart of the General Staff, the famous Department IA, the Operations Department, now worked day and night. Innumerable plans were suggested, rejected, changed, worked out down to the last detail.

The former Greater General Staff had worked on the basis of existing possibilities. The new General Staff worked out plans on a basis that did not yet exist, but which would exist if the plans could be carried out. It prepared for the total mobilization and total war that was to take place at some indefinite time.

It worked for "*der Tag*."

On February 1, 1934, Freiherr von Fritsch became Chief of the Army High Command, and immediately after his appointment he installed a young officer, scarcely more than forty, in the Army Department of the *Allgemeine Truppenamt*—the equivalent of the Operations Department of the old Greater General Staff. And when the new General Staff was established, this young man, of whom Fritsch thought a good deal, was given the crucial post of Staff Officer IA, head of the Operations Department.

This young man was promoted with astonishing rapidity over the heads of many who were before him in line, first to Major General and then to Lieutenant General. Even in Army and General Staff circles he was little known. The general public had never heard of him. Hans von Wietersheim was an unknown quantity to most Germans.

But a handful of generals, and Fritsch and Ludwig Beck in particular, believed this Hans von Wietersheim to be one of the most talented men the German General Staff had ever had. A few of the officers even spoke of a "new Ludendorff."

As time went on, this accolade should have proved right, but not only in the sense the generals had used it. Hans von Wietersheim indeed proved to be enormously gifted. But he also proved, like Ludendorff himself, incapable of bearing too heavy a strain.

All this came out only some time later, after years of working out campaign plans, preparing all the plans which Hitler

later was to carry out. During all these years General von Wietersheim, whether he worked at his Bureau IA in the Benderstrasse or as he did later in the war when he attached himself to General Headquarters in its tour of the various countries of Europe, remained in the background. His name was seldom mentioned. Even when his great crisis came, only a few people knew what he really looked like. He was probably the only German general who never posed willingly for a photograph.

■



PART III

*THE SORCERER'S  
APPRENTICES*

*The spirits raised by me  
Vainly would I lay. . . .*

GOETHE





## THE MAKING OF A TOOL

### I

**D**URING the first years of the German Republic there were three military putsches. Three times armed forces attempted to seize political power in Germany. Three times the generals failed.

The first attempt was the Kapp Putsch in March, 1920. *Generallandschaftsdirektor* Wolfgang Kapp was really little more than a figurehead. After all, he was only a bank director. The real hero of the conspiracy was General Walther von Luettwitz, military commandant of Berlin.

The pretext for the putsch was the demobilization of the German Army. It may be remembered that Seeckt had persuaded the Allies to allow the Army to be reduced gradually to one hundred thousand men during the course of the year 1920. General von Luettwitz claimed that the Army was not to be reduced to one hundred thousand men, but to twenty thousand. He demanded that President Fritz Ebert protest against this intolerable, dictatorial requirement on the part of the Allies. Von Luettwitz finally delivered an outright ultimatum to Ebert in which he demanded the dissolution of the National Assembly (the German parliament of the period) and a reconstruction of the government. Ebert refused and retorted with the demand that Luettwitz resign as military commandant. The General would not even consider this, and arranged for troops (the Erhardt Brigade) to march on Berlin.

After Seeckt had refused to fire upon the mutinous troops, the Government fled temporarily to Stuttgart. The collapse of the putsch was certainly not due to any action on the part of the Government, let alone on the part of Seeckt. If it was due

to any external action at all, the general strike of the Berlin workers and the sympathy strike of the German railroad workers deserve the credit.

But more than anything else the putsch collapsed because those who led it—General von Luettwitz and his comrades—turned out to be quite incapable of seizing power, much less holding it.

For example, von Luettwitz immediately banned all newspapers. Then he issued a huge number of decrees and ordered that these decrees be printed at once on the front pages of all newspapers. He was extremely surprised when no one ever learned of the decrees because the banned newspapers did not appear.

Then there was the question of funds. It had never occurred to Herr von Luettwitz that it took money to run a government. When he did discover it, he sent a messenger to the Reichsbank with a letter signed by Kapp. In the letter he demanded payment of a million Reichsmarks. But he had not counted on the German bureaucrats. The officials of the Reichsbank found that neither Herr von Luettwitz nor Herr Kapp had deposits of a million marks, or powers of attorney to withdraw such a sum. They therefore politely but firmly refused the request.

Subsequently, there was a heated quarrel between General von Luettwitz and Kapp, a quarrel which more than anything else indicates why the putsch had to fail. Kapp said they should take the money by force; after all, they had the power. Whereupon Luettwitz said acidly: "Prussian officers are not safecrackers."

Although the entire affair was over in a few days, virtually nothing was done to punish the officers who took part. Some seven hundred and fifty of them were asked to appear in court; some two dozen were finally convicted and sentenced to comparatively short prison terms which they never served. General von Luettwitz was sentenced to a term of ten years. He obtained a false passport from the Ebert Government he had tried to overthrow, and went abroad for a while.

The second military putsch was promoted by Major Franz Buchrucker, one of the leading men in the Black Reichswehr, which was headed, as has been pointed out, by Herr von Bock. This putsch took place in Kuestrin (on the Baltic) on October 1, 1923. Buchrucker wanted to disarm the Reichswehr garrison of Kuestrin and in this way give the signal for a general military putsch throughout Germany. He had reason to assume that General von Seeckt would co-operate. At any rate, von Seeckt had heard from von Bock about the preparations. But at the last minute General von Seeckt decided against the undertaking. He even demanded that von Bock dissolve the Kuestrin Black Reichswehr. Von Bock passed this demand on to Buchrucker. Thereupon the Major struck prematurely, almost without previous preparation.

The attempt was doomed to failure from the moment General von Seeckt ordered the Kuestrin garrison to resist.

The third putsch was the so-called Beer Hall Putsch on November 9, 1923, in Munich, in which Adolf Hitler for the first time came before the eyes of a world-wide public. However, the putsch was by no means concocted by Hitler alone, or by his small and weak Party. This putsch, too, was an attempt by the military to seize power.

The background was extremely complicated. Besides Hitler, the major figures were General von Ludendorff and General von Lossow, the military commander of Munich. After many vague preliminary conferences, Hitler felt justified in assuming that General von Lossow was on his side. (Later, in court, each of the participants accused the others of lying.) General von Lossow decided at the last minute to suppress the putsch. When Hitler and Ludendorff set out on their famous march to the Feldherrenhalle, von Lossow ordered his troops to shoot.

General von Lossow, who earlier had cynically declared that he would join any putsch that had a fifty-one per cent chance of success, probably discovered at the last minute that Hitler did not have that great a chance. What was more important and probably the decisive factor for him was the fact that a success-

ful putsch would have meant at least a temporary rupture of the unity of the Reich—and to him and all the other generals, this was an intolerable thought.

But perhaps this was not the final and deepest reason. The history of the three putsches shows that the generals were incapable of seizing power, and that the first two times they had not even really wanted it. It is not farfetched to assume that there is a causal connection here. The Kapp putsch obviously satisfied the generals; they were convinced that it would not work; they had already realized that they would have to find another way.

Later history proves the correctness of this assumption. For after all, from 1923 on, the Republic became weaker and weaker; and from 1923 on the generals became stronger and stronger. Yet they never attempted another real putsch. Undoubtedly, any putsch during the succeeding years would have had an incomparably greater chance for success. That none was attempted indicates that the generals were not interested in setting up a military dictatorship. They wanted to achieve their goals by another route, and the course of events has shown that they knew what they were about.

The only exception, the only one among them who refused to play ball, was General Erich Ludendorff.

## 2

Unlike Hindenburg and most of the other older generals, Ludendorff did not return from the last war to sulk. Nor did he return like von Seeckt, von Schleicher, and von Bock, determined to set his teeth and systematically reconquer what had been lost. Ludendorff went mad.

The shake-up in the High Command in 1916, which had placed Hindenburg at the head and Ludendorff in command of the General Staff, changed the whole conduct of the war. Until then the armed forces, not Germany, had made war. That is, the war was conducted with consideration for the

future peacetime needs of the Reich; human energy, coal, productive power, etc., were spared. Ludendorff's accomplishment—from Germany's point of view—was to recognize that this could no longer go on; Hindenburg's accomplishment was to execute what Ludendorff had realized.

In 1916 Germany began what the greatest of military writers, Karl von Clausewitz, had described one hundred years earlier as "the utmost effort" and what Ludendorff later called "total war." Everything that Germany possessed in material and manpower was put to work. The German Army was made incomparably stronger, so that in 1918 it was far stronger than it had been at the beginning of the war. It had more men, they were better armed, the delivery of war materials had increased enormously and it was organized for the long haul.

The spring offensive of 1918 was a tremendous German victory. For Ludendorff this was only logical. But what he could not understand was the fact that the enemy was constantly growing stronger too.

Later, in his writings on the World War, Ludendorff desperately tried to find the reason for the "mystery." It could not be Germany's fault. Germany had sacrificed enough and accomplished enough to win the final victory according to Ludendorff's calculations. According to him, the explanations did not lie with his opponents either.

From the standpoint of a continental strategist—and this was what Ludendorff was—a given maximum of means was needed to achieve a given military end. This maximum could be expressed in numbers of divisions, artillery, and other weapons. This maximum could not be passed. For example, it was a matter of complete indifference to Ludendorff whether France alone or a whole group of nations provided this maximum. It was also a matter of indifference whether the side that did put forth the maximum was capable of more. For the maximum was at the same time the optimum. From the purely technical point of view, from the nature of spatial limitation, more than the maximum could not be put out on the battlefield.

Ludendorff had concluded that Germany was in a position to resist this maximum achievement of the enemy. The victory of the spring of 1918 proved this to be the case.

Therefore, Germany must win.

But in spite of the victory of that spring, Germany had not won. Ludendorff did not understand why. He sensed that forces were at work here which did not fit into the schemes of the General Staff. There were "hidden forces" at work. He became more and more convinced that the war had not been decided on the battlefields of France, but somewhere else in the world, by these hidden forces. From the day of the defeat to the day of his death, Ludendorff never ceased to search for these mysterious forces.

Through all his writings we can find the same train of thought: Germany must make such-and-such an effort in order to win. Germany had made such-and-such an effort. And still Germany had not won. Why? Why?

He soon found what seemed to him the only possible, the only logical solution. It is interesting and significant that this man, who thought with such absolute clarity and precision in his own field of tactics and strategy, wandered into the wildest sort of fantasies as soon as he left that field. The forces he finally discovered as the cause of the German defeat were the "secret world powers." These secret world powers were the Jews, the Catholics, and the Free Masons. Ludendorff thought he knew just how these secret powers had worked against Germany. They were the ones who had joined together in 1914 and fallen upon peaceful Germany. Whenever Germany seemed about to win, they had incited fresh, new nations to join the war against Germany. In particular they had seen to it that the United States, which was well known to be ruled by Jews, plunged into the struggle. Not satisfied with that, they had acted traitorously in Germany herself and caused many Germans to sabotage the war.

By the time Ludendorff had wandered so far, he no longer realized that he was entangled in contradictions. On the one

hand he had declared that Germany had done the maximum possible; on the other hand he spoke of sabotage within Germany.

From this point on, Ludendorff's discoveries can be considered only from the medical standpoint. The Battle of the Marne in 1914, for example, had not been lost by Chief of Staff Moltke at all. It was lost by a Jew named Dr. Rudolf Steiner, the founder of the Anthroposophic Movement, a friend of Moltke's whom Moltke had invited to Headquarters because he hoped that conversations with his friend would calm him and relieve his nervous tension. Incidentally, Steiner was not a Jew.

Ludendorff never understood the real reason for the German defeat. In his book, *Total War*, his thinking was as continental as ever, and he declared that the next time Germany would win if she expended the utmost effort not only in the economic and military fields but in the psychological realm as well. To do this, Ludendorff declared, it was necessary to rid Germany not only of the Jews, Free Masons, and Catholics, but of Christianity itself, which was after all a product of the Jews. He offered as a substitute the "German Faith" of his wife, Mathilde, whom he praised as the greatest religious genius of all time. Moreover, the German people must be given the one ideal military commander who would have unlimited power over their souls and bodies, and they must follow him with blind obedience into battle against a whole world of enemies. A people that did not know how to appreciate its ideal military commander was lost. The "commander" of whom Ludendorff spoke so much in his writings was, of course, Ludendorff himself.

In spite of the lost war, his reputation in Germany was so great that more than ten years passed before people slowly began to realize that he had lost his sanity. At first he fled abroad, but he soon returned. In Munich he became chairman of the League of Nationalist Soldiers. Through this league he got in touch with Hitler, and during Hitler's putsch he more or less represented the link between the good old days and the Third Reich that Hitler promised to establish. Hitler natu-



rally had tremendous respect for Ludendorff. After all, Ludendorff had been the second most important man in the World War; Hitler had been an unknown soldier.

In the trial that followed the putsch Ludendorff was charged with a great many illegal acts. But, unlike Hitler, he was pronounced not guilty. He later founded the German-Racist Freedom Party and in 1925 was a candidate against Hindenburg for president of the Reich. When Ludendorff received only a little more than three hundred thousand votes in this election, Hitler's enthusiasm for the general cooled considerably. Hitler realized that the man was not as popular as he had thought.

Ludendorff became a lonely man. He quarreled with Hindenburg and with the German Officers League. He felt himself personally threatened by Free Masons, and in a newspaper article he demanded protection against would-be assassins. In that same article he denied Hindenburg the right "to take the German soldier's uniform with him into the grave." He was involved in various swindles. Finally he made the acquaintance of a certain Tausend who declared he could manufacture gold. Ludendorff was wild with enthusiasm; he signed a contract that granted him seventy-five per cent of the net profits, which were to be used for patriotic purposes. When it was revealed that Tausend was an ordinary swindler who had simply pocketed the money, there was a tremendous scandal. In 1929 Ludendorff published a pamphlet: "The Menace of a World War on German Soil." In this he prophesied a new World War by May 1, 1932, in which England, Germany, Italy, and Hungary would fight Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and France.

Shortly before Ludendorff's death in 1937, Hitler wanted to honor him by appointing him General Field Marshal. But Ludendorff declined. To the very end, aside from small compromises he was compelled to make, he would have nothing to do with Hitler.

Ludendorff's hatred of Hitler can partly be explained by the fact that his mind was failing. When in 1926, for example,

he declared that he wanted to have nothing more to do with the Nazis because the Party was run by Jews, he was clearly insane. But there was a more basic reason for the gulf that had arisen between Ludendorff and Hitler after the failure of the Beer Hall Putsch and which had widened with the years.

This was simply the gulf between the general and the common soldier. The gulf between two worlds, which could not be bridged, despite Hitler's awed reverence for Ludendorff in the beginning, and despite the astounding later career of the Nazis.

In court, Ludendorff made no attempt to defend his fellow prisoner, Hitler. This was certainly not in order to save himself; such considerations did not occur to the old general. But by this time Ludendorff was disgusted with Hitler; he simply didn't like him. During the trial and afterward he seized every opportunity to get further away from Hitler, although it was many years before he arrived at the point of writing and talking against the Fuehrer—and even then the final step was dictated more by his conception of political duty than by personal repugnance for the man.

During the trial itself Ludendorff did not go so far, for example, as General von Lossow, who accused Hitler of being faithless to his word, cowardly, unreliable, and "impossible." But Ludendorff felt that all these accusations were true. Probably neither of the generals was particularly shocked at Hitler's breaking his word. German officers, contrary to the popular belief, were used to such breaches within their own caste. More important was the general condemnation that Hitler was "impossible."

To the generals he was simply a person one did not sit at the same table with, a person with whom one could have no social relationship. He did not belong.

rally had tremendous respect for Ludendorff. After all, Ludendorff had been the second most important man in the World War; Hitler had been an unknown soldier.

In the trial that followed the putsch Ludendorff was charged with a great many illegal acts. But, unlike Hitler, he was pronounced not guilty. He later founded the German-Racist Freedom Party and in 1925 was a candidate against Hindenburg for president of the Reich. When Ludendorff received only a little more than three hundred thousand votes in this election, Hitler's enthusiasm for the general cooled considerably. Hitler realized that the man was not as popular as he had thought.

Ludendorff became a lonely man. He quarreled with Hindenburg and with the German Officers League. He felt himself personally threatened by Free Masons, and in a newspaper article he demanded protection against would-be assassins. In that same article he denied Hindenburg the right "to take the German soldier's uniform with him into the grave." He was involved in various swindles. Finally he made the acquaintance of a certain Tausend who declared he could manufacture gold. Ludendorff was wild with enthusiasm; he signed a contract that granted him seventy-five per cent of the net profits, which were to be used for patriotic purposes. When it was revealed that Tausend was an ordinary swindler who had simply pocketed the money, there was a tremendous scandal. In 1929 Ludendorff published a pamphlet: "The Menace of a World War on German Soil." In this he prophesied a new World War by May 1, 1932, in which England, Germany, Italy, and Hungary would fight Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and France.

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## 3

Such a position was not taken by von Lossow and Ludendorff alone. All the generals felt more or less the same way about Hitler. But they could not afford the luxury of catering to their feelings. They needed Hitler.

It all started in 1917, at a time when no German general had ever heard of a man named Hitler. It began when a few of the generals realized that defeat was inevitable, and when some of the more farsighted realized that the Kaiser would have to go. It was only a step from this realization to the idea that they needed "another Kaiser," one who would be able to rouse the masses and lead them into a new war. By 1920 this thought was being expressed openly on all sides. In a book called *General Psychologos*, the author, First Lieutenant Kurt Hesse, discussed the "necessity of finding a Leader who will guarantee the future of Germany for all of us."

That same year Colonel Nicolai's book was published: *Intelligence Service, Press and Morale*. Nicolai wrote: "A disunited people could not win this war. To win the next round we must have a united people and a single Leader."

The events of November, 1918, had shown that the Kaiser could not depend upon his generals at the crucial moment. This did not mean that the generals or the rest of the officers could do without the Kaiser—for any length of time. They needed a chief, otherwise they were hampered. Perhaps this was a result of their history. It had been so in the time of Frederick the Great. "The King of Prussia must necessarily be a soldier and the highest commander in wartime," Frederick had declared. "It is to the shame of the throne when degenerate and indolent princes leave the leadership of their troops to the generals." As a matter of fact, paradoxical as it sounds, the German generals had been somewhat outraged that Wilhelm II did so little leading himself and left so much to them, the generals, even though they disliked his interference when he did get around to taking a hand.

Naturally, the officers' concept of the duties of a Kaiser and a leader changed in the course of time. We may assume that when the officers began to look around for a new Kaiser, they were interested less in a military leader than in a political fuehrer. For they had meanwhile found out that they could handle the military end perfectly well themselves.

They were all monarchists, of course, and remained monarchists. A new Kaiser or a king would have been ideal for them. But this had nothing to do with loyalty. They had shown how far their loyalty went in November, 1918. What they needed was someone at the head, someone to take the lead. Someone who would see to it that parliament—which, they felt, was always anti-militaristic—would interfere as little as possible with them, the generals. And someone who would respect their wishes, that is, who would head off all political difficulties for them. And someone who would have enough authority to prevent constant change, revolutionary uprisings, and strikes that would interfere with their program and their work.

In a sense the situation of these generals was tragic. They had the power—for a few years after the Revolution, at any rate, they had more power than anyone else in Germany. Without their approval and support it was impossible for any person or party to govern. But they themselves could not govern. They had the power, but they could not use it for themselves. They had the power, but all they could do with it was to pass it on to someone else. They needed a man to take care of their business. They could not run the business alone.

There is no better illustration of what a matter of indifference it was to them who the Kaiser was, or how disloyal they actually were, than their first choice for a new leader.

They chose first a man whom they should have hated more than others, a man who was a member of the Social Democratic Party. This man was Gustav Noske, the first War Minister of the Republic. To be sure, Gustav Noske turned out to be a remarkable compound of stupidity, cowardice, and treachery. Most of the German Socialists betrayed the Revolu-

tion to some extent out of incompetence. But Noske betrayed it entirely, and deliberately. He was the most amoral, the guiltiest of them all. He allowed the generals to get him completely under their thumb; he danced to their tune and did everything they asked. He even gave them authority to use machine guns against the masses who had elected him.

Nevertheless, it was surprising that the generals—even before the signing of the Treaty of Versailles—should offer to make him dictator of Germany. For he was what they most hated and despised: a Social Democrat.

Noske declined the offer. For once, apparently, he realized that if he accepted he would be no more than a figurehead for the generals.

This attempt with Noske indicated clearly what the generals had in mind. They already sensed what Ludendorff formulated clearly some time later in his book, *Total War*. The next world war would need the entire psychological forces of the people. A man was needed who was capable of rousing the masses.

This was why a Social Democrat—or possibly an apostate Communist—was not undesirable to the generals. But they could not find this man in the Left parties. For, after all, members of a great party like the Social Democratic or Communist Party had certain ties, certain traditions.

The generals dreamed, quite logically from their point of view, of a man who would have no ties and no traditions. Of a man who, as Nicolai put it, “would stand in back of the civilian population with a gun.”

They needed a man who was ready and able to take full responsibility for all the things they had done and intended still to do. They needed a man, therefore, who had no moral inhibitions and no moral ties. A man who had no reputation to defend. A man who could afford to be dishonorable and to break his word.

And after a long search they found their man. It was more or less an accident that he happened to be Adolf Hitler.

## 4

Hitler's youth, and especially his development until 1920-21, is still a mystery, and may well remain a mystery forever. The same is true of his first contacts with the Reichswehr in 1919. For the present, there are no limits to the legends that may spring up, and are already springing up.

The most reliable sources appear to be certain Reichswehr officers, men with whom Hitler had dealings shortly after the collapse and the return of the troops to Germany. For a while after the defeat Hitler remained in the hospital, still suffering from the effects of poison gas. Then he tried to get a job as a letter-carrier in the Munich post office. According to reliable sources, he was unable to pass the examination. But this may well have been a result of his having been gassed.

Early in 1919 certain officers in Munich—among them, Captains Franz Halder and Ernst Roehm—became worried about the activities of the soldiers' councils (or soviets) which were becoming more and more communist and, logically enough after the long war, pacifist. These officers wanted information on how the common soldier thought and felt so that they would be equipped to launch a propaganda campaign. What they most needed were spies. One of these spies was Adolf Hitler.

There is no doubt that he did not accept this rather unsavory job out of any perverted patriotism. He became a spy—and some say also an *agent provocateur*—because it was a way to earn enough money for food and shelter.

A little later he began to give patriotic lectures in the soldiers' barracks. During this period he did not give up his spying, but he now spied mainly on labor unions. He regularly attended union meetings—in civilian clothes, of course. This went on until the middle of 1920 when he was officially discharged from the Army.

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler described this period in a way that is far more flattering to himself. According to his story, officers of the Reichswehr approached him after he had made a great



anti-Semitic speech at a political meeting—Germany was chock-full of political meetings in those days. At this time the Reichswehr was trying to co-ordinate the work of all the so-called nationalist leagues in the Reichswehr as “volunteers,” to get their help in concealing weapons, and so on. For this purpose, also, they needed spies. So that even if Hitler had not originally offered to spy for the Reichswehr, even if he had originally been approached by officers, he nevertheless began his post-war career as a spy. It is certain that none of the officers with whom Hitler had dealings at that time ever dreamed of a political career for this poor, gassed, confused starveling of an ex-soldier.

The second period of co-operation, which was incomparably more important, began with Hitler’s “discovery” by Captain Ernst Roehm of the Bavarian General Staff, an unusually capable and tenacious man. This was a good year later, when Hitler was already member No. 7 of the German Workers Party, the Party which later was to become the National Socialist German Workers Party. The connection between Roehm and Hitler was established by Dietrich Eckart, an ex-journalist who led a Bohemian life in Munich and who when not too drunk was bursting with ideas. It was from him that Hitler borrowed most of his ideas during the early days.

Through Roehm, Hitler met General Xaver Ritter von Epp. Epp and Roehm ultimately gave the young politician the sixty thousand marks he needed to purchase the bankrupt *Voelkischer Beobachter*. Thus the still-insignificant Party obtained an official organ. Needless to say, the sixty thousand marks came from the funds of the Reichswehr.

The next years saw many turbulent meetings run by Hitler and his friends in Munich and its vicinity. The meetings were characterized by brutally aggressive Hitler speeches and by the activities of groups of young men who later became famous as the SA and SS. These groups formed the “*Saalschutz*”—the meeting-hall guards. It was their business, supposedly, to see that everything was orderly and that speakers were not heckled and that people with dissenting opinions be given an oppor-

tunity to speak. In reality their purpose was to terrorize the audience and to prevent dissenters from talking; in fact, to beat them up and throw them out of the meeting. These terrorist groups had to be trained, of course. Among others, Roehm helped to train them. He was assisted by a large number of Reichswehr officers who wore civilian dress for the occasion.

Both before the putsch of 1923 and after, when Hitler was released from prison and had to rebuild the Party completely, the Party needed money and more money. That money was obtained almost entirely from private industry. Once more the Reichswehr, particularly the Munich officers, effected the necessary introduction to wealthy businessmen.

The Reichswehr's support of Hitler during the early years was not at all systematic. It was sporadic and limited mainly to a few enthusiastic officers like Roehm and von Epp. The support became stronger and more regular, however, as Hitler's power grew. The more popular his Party became, the clearer it became to the Reichswehr officers that the Nazi Party had a chance of winning out. Which meant that they had a better chance to establish a popular basis for the policies and goals of the Army. This in turn meant that there was less risk in supporting this Party than any of the other nationalist parties.

The turning point was probably the Ulm trial in September, 1930, where Hitler for the first time formally spoke the language of the Reichswehr. It was also the first time that Hitler and Ludwig Beck met personally.

It seemed that at least three officers stationed at the garrison of Ulm, who sat in the prisoners' dock—Lieutenants Scheringer, Ludin and Wendt—had tried to form National Socialist cells within the Reichswehr and had got in touch with the Munich headquarters of the Nazi Party, inquiring about methods of nationalist propaganda. They were betrayed and arrested before the assembled men in the camp yard. The commander of the regiment had protested vigorously against the arrests. This commander was Ludwig Beck.

The case came before the Federal Court at Leipzig. The ac-

cused did not attempt to conceal their beliefs. They admitted they had tried to set up an organization within the Reichswehr which would prevent the repetition of events like the Munich putsch of 1923 when the Reichswehr was used against the Nazis. The examination of many officers showed that the ideas of the accused were shared by a great many officers. One officer delivered himself of the definition: "Nationalism is equivalent to patriotism, and pacifism is treason." Lieutenant Scheringer, who later went over to the Communists and became one of the Nazis' bitterest enemies (he was one of the first victims when Hitler took power), declared: "The struggle for liberation will always remain the final goal of the Reichswehr."

All the officers were in agreement "that the government is always railed at."

To settle the question of whether attempting to form a Nazi cell in the Army constituted treason, it was necessary to find out whether the Nazis intended to bring about a revolution; that is, whether they intended to commit treason. Adolf Hitler was therefore called upon to testify. Hitler indignantly denied the suspicion of illegality. He declared under oath that his Party intended to come to power only by legal means. When the judge asked how he hoped to achieve this, he declared:

"When we have won two or three elections to the Reichstag, the national liberation will take place. Then we will no longer recognize the treaties that were forced upon us. We will take our stand on them; we will break them with every means at our command; and then we will be in the midst of the revolution."

"Would you bring this about in an illegal way, too?"

"If the events of 1807, 1808, and 1809 are also considered illegal...."

Hitler was referring to the years of the so-called liberation of Germany from the yoke of Napoleon, and to the preparation for the "Wars of Liberation." This was the language of the Army. This was exactly what the Army wanted. Not a putsch; a slow but sure establishment of a popular basis for a policy

that would ultimately break the Versailles Treaty, which the Republic had set out to fulfill, though by no means implicitly.

At this time, then, the Nazi Party and the Army were pursuing the same goals.

One of the many officers who testified, candidly declared: "We officers are patriotic. And patriotism is the property of only a few parties."

Colonel Beck spoke even more clearly. He said, "The Reichswehr is told every day that it is a leader-army. What is a young officer to understand by that?" He was deliberately twisting the words of his commanders. When the officers were told that they were a leader-army, the meaning was that a small army would some day lead a great army—that is, it should consider itself a cadre army in the sense intended by General von Seeckt. But Beck was cynical enough to admit frankly the possibility of twisting this phrase into a reference to Hitler and the Nazis. And he tacitly admitted that he and his comrades would do nothing to clear up such a misunderstanding.

The rest of the world did not pay enough attention to that trial. It was generally believed in Germany, as well, that the trial revealed a gulf between the younger and political-minded officers, and the older, conservative officers. Only a few understood that there was no gulf at all; that the older officers were merely sending the younger ones ahead as an advance guard.

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## DECEIVERS DECEIVED

### I

**A**FTER THE Ulm trial, the Army supported Hitler at every opportunity. It was therefore only rendering the Reichswehr its due when in 1934 the Fuehrer declared publicly: "The Army alone has made possible the success of our work."

Even while they supported him, even while they held the ladder of success for him, they despised him. But the very fact that they did despise him proved to them that he was their man. For the man they wanted could not be honorable, could not be a gentleman and a nobleman.

We know that Chief of Staff Ludwig Beck never spoke a word in private to Hitler. We know that Hindenburg referred to him almost to the last as the "Bohemian Corporal." We know that even a year after Hitler took power, a butler of General von Fritsch remarked to an American journalist who was looking at the signatures of Hitler and Goering in the Guest Book of the Reichswehr Ministry: "Yes, we must receive everybody nowadays. They have the power now."

The generals all felt the same way as von Lossow and Ludendorff. Hitler didn't belong. Everything about the man was repugnant to them.

Generals like terse, precise, simple speech. Hitler spoke obscurely, bombastically, mystically; he shouted with hysteria; and above all, he spoke too much.

The generals believed that a man should have control over himself and his body; that a man should be economical in his movements; that, in sum, a man's monocle should not fall out of his eye. Hitler alternated between the heights and the depths; sometimes he even burst into tears, and he always

talked with his hands, as they imagined a prophet from the Old Testament might have done. And he always talked about himself. His every second word was "I." The generals might have forgiven that in a monarch, though even then unwillingly. For even a monarch ought to say "We," and mean thereby not himself but the whole idea of monarchy. The Army had trained the generals to prize anonymity.

The generals were accustomed to rising early, going to bed early, eating well, and drinking a good deal. This Hitler usually went to bed at dawn, slept till noon, ate no meat, and drank no alcohol. Hitler understood nothing about hunting, let alone women. And Hitler had no feeling for family tradition.

No, Herr Hitler certainly did not belong, and from the very beginning the generals steered clear of him. That is, they avoided him long before he took power and at a time when they were committed to helping him.

There were, as a matter of fact, only two generals who were seen with him at all before he took power. One was General von Epp, who played a decisive part in Hitler's early days and who might be said to have had even a personal liking for him. The other was Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck who had fought heroically, if uselessly, in Africa during the World War. Upon closer examination, it is evident that these generals were outsiders themselves within the German military caste, and Bavarian officers were never considered quite one hundred per cent. Epp was Bavarian. He had not even attended a cadet school; he was the son of a painter. Like Lettow-Vorbeck, he had spent the crucial years of his life outside Germany, in Asia and Africa. These two were therefore a little more independent in thought and action and less tied to the clique. Nevertheless, the fact that they accepted Hitler socially and spoke to him meant a good deal to him during those first difficult years.

It was not quite the truth General von Blomberg proclaimed in an article in the *Voelkischer Beobachter* in 1934, when he spoke of "the Fuehrer who once came forth from our ranks."



## 2

Hitler's first action after he took over the government was the reinstatement of military jurisdiction. This finally ended the "shameful" condition created by the Republic under which the civil authorities could indict and convict soldiers and even officers. Thus, in a sense the Ulm trial, which had so enraged the officers, particularly Ludwig Beck, was retroactively declared invalid.

Naturally, the generals who had shaped Hitler into power did not want the Bohemian Corporal to interfere with them in military matters. Anyone who knew the Prussian generals will realize that such a thought could not possibly have occurred to them. From Fritsch to Beck, they all assumed that Hitler would be satisfied with directing a parade or two.

But on the very first day after he became Chancellor, Hitler showed he would not be satisfied with that. On January 31, 1933, he went to the Berlin barracks to talk to the soldiers. The generals were painfully embarrassed. It was not proper for a Chancellor to speak to soldiers without previously discussing the matter with the military authorities. The affair was reported to General von Hammerstein-Equord who promptly invited Hitler to have a discussion with some four hundred higher officers.

Hitler went, but nothing like a discussion took place. Hitler spoke uninterruptedly for two hours.

Nevertheless, the evening was a success for Hitler. To be sure, most of the officers made fun of his speech habits, but all of them had the impression that Hitler was so enthusiastic about the Army that in the end he would do whatever they asked him.

At later meetings they began to take the Fuehrer more seriously. His extraordinary military knowledge astounded them. His ability to think in military terms, and think quite sensibly, completely nonplused them. It was incomprehensible in a man who had never attended the Military Academy—who had not even been an officer. A man who was nothing but an outsider,

a layman. The officers could not know that Hitler prepared for these meetings and discussions like a student cramming for an examination. The clique of younger officers, who belonged to the Party or sympathized with it, prepared Hitler for these conferences. Colonel Jodl, whose relationship with Hitler was becoming more and more personal, sat up night after night with the Fuehrer and coached him for these "examinations."

Still, it never occurred to General von Fritsch, let alone to Ludwig Beck, to invite Hitler to sit in when military plans were being worked out. Even the plan for the remilitarization of the Rhineland, though ordered by Hitler and executed unwillingly by the generals, was worked out without the assistance of the Fuehrer.

But that was the turning point. Hitler declared that from that time on he wanted to help with the plans, for which, after all, he bore the responsibility. Shrugging, the generals consented. They realized by now that they had taken the Bohemian Corporal a little too lightly. They still had little respect for him, but they had to admit that the man did know something about their *métier*. They tried to find out just how much of his knowledge was Hitler's own, how much he had learned recently, and how much he had picked up from men like Wilhelm Keitel, then Chief of the Army Organization Department, Siegmund List, Chief of the Army Training Office, and Hermann Geyer, Chief of the Army Department—all General Staff officers who did not belong to the clique and whom Hitler had won over comparatively early.

But such considerations were a waste of time. For when the generals marched into the Rhineland on Hitler's orders and on Hitler's responsibility, they knew that they had made a mistake. The man whom they had set on the throne was not the man who would take orders from them. They were already beginning to realize that their role was to be difficult and perhaps tragic. That they were in the position of the sorcerer's apprentice, who could summon up supernatural forces but who did not know how to get rid of them again.

## 3

We must not suppose that the generals' decision to help Hitler win power was formulated at any one time, or that it was unanimous. Rather, it developed slowly over a number of years from an experiment and vague contingency to the only possibility. And even up until the last moment, there were still many generals and high officers who were altogether unwilling to help Hitler take power.

One of these was General Wilhelm Heye, who had become Commanding General of the Army in 1926, when Seeckt was forced to resign. Like the other generals, Heye hoped to revive the German Army and dreamed of a war of revenge. In addition—there will be more to say about this later on—he had certain interesting contacts in Russia which the French found disturbing.

On October 31, 1930, shortly before the Nazis' first decisive electoral victories, Heye resigned. The official reason was his age, but the real reason was his views. He saw coming what finally did come. To a small group of friends, he declared: "I want to make the Army great as the instrument of the Reich, and this time for the entire German people. In Russia I saw that it can be done. Herr Hitler will not be able to do it. The political parties should keep their hands off our Army. We don't want a National Socialist Reichswehr. Every officer ought to take this view. And to any who believe that the Reichswehr can support a Party, we must say that the first condition for an army, both for officers and men, is political peace."

It is hard to say how sincere was General Heye's desire to make the Army an instrument of the people. It seems a rather unlikely idea for a man like Heye, who belonged to the clique. But in any case, Heye clearly distrusted Hitler and the prospect of Hitler's taking power, which he could easily prophesy since he knew that it had already been decided.

His successor, Freiherr von Hammerstein-Equord, also had no great love for Hitler. In November, 1930, it became known

for the first time that Hammerstein had remarked to friends during the course of a hunt, that the Reichswehr would not permit Hitler's rise. Hammerstein was, however, already well known for his contemptuous remarks about Hitler; he never let an opportunity slip to make fun of him. He was so determined to fight the Nazi leader that on January 30, 1933, a few hours before Hitler took power, he spoke to Hindenburg and pleaded with him not to take this last, extreme step. But by then it was too late and Hindenburg, confused and irritated that one general opposed Hitler so strongly while so many of the others supported him, brusquely ordered Hammerstein to go.

The most important of the generals who could not get used to the idea of allowing Hitler to take power was Kurt von Schleicher. His motives, however, were different from those of Heye and von Hammerstein. Herr von Schleicher had always had his own very personal ideas and plans.

Early in 1928 his immediate "superior," Reichswehr Minister Otto Gessler, had been forced out. The reason for this—which need not be discussed at any further length—was the "Phoebus Scandal" which centered about the investment of public funds in a moving-picture company by certain officers.

Schleicher then decided to make his old friend, General Groener, Reichswehr Minister. That is, he urged this course upon Hindenburg, who liked Groener and thought highly of him and his work as his last Quartermaster General after Ludendorff's retirement.

The parties of the Right were none too pleased at this choice, for Groener was not an out-and-out reactionary. He had even made it a condition of his acceptance that he should not be required to belong to any party. But he was, after all, a general, and since the failure of the Kapp Putsch the first military man to become Reichswehr Minister. That alone was enough to arouse Republican suspicions.

As a result, the legislature wanted to have someone besides the Reichswehr Minister—a man who could be responsible to the legislature or at least give it information. (The Reichswehr

Ministers had often refused to give any information to the Reichstag on the grounds that affairs of national defense had to be kept secret.) The Reichstag wanted a parliamentarian as Secretary of State in the Reichswehr Ministry. But it was Schleicher who finally received this post. In reality, his position remained unchanged. For in a sense he had already been Secretary of State in the Reichswehr Ministry. The only difference was that now he was seen more frequently in the Reichstag and his name appeared in the newspapers. He was emerging more and more out of the shadows.

The other generals were not dissatisfied with this state of affairs. If someone had to give information to the pacifist legislators and the "Jewish" editors, they preferred to have one of their own men do it.

Groener's relationship with Schleicher remained peculiar. The difference in ages—some fifteen years—was no longer as great as it had been in 1911, when Groener took Schleicher into the General Staff. But Groener still considered Schleicher his son; he trusted him implicitly and was more concerned about Schleicher's welfare and career than about his own.

Schleicher, outwardly as friendly and devoted as ever, was unhampered by any sentimentality. Ruthlessly, he pushed old Groener into the background.

Ruthlessly, he usurped complete representation of the Reichswehr Ministry, with the help of his charming and no less ambitious wife.

This situation remained unchanged when in 1931 Groener became Minister of the Interior, in addition to his post as Reichswehr Minister. The fact that his chief could no longer devote his full time to the affairs of the Reichswehr Ministry simply offered a further opportunity to Schleicher to seize all power in the Reichswehr Ministry.

A succession of ugly and crafty intrigues began. Groener, still naïvely trustful of Schleicher, consulted his "adopted son" whenever he did not feel capable of solving the problems of the Ministry of the Interior alone—which meant nearly every

day. Schleicher was always willing to give advice, but this advice was carefully calculated to endanger Groener's prestige and ultimately to destroy it. In particular, Schleicher advised him to proceed harshly with the Nazis.

In 1929 he got Groener to issue an order that soldiers were to be rewarded for reporting comrades who were Communist or Nazi. Needless to say, neither the Communists nor the few far-sighted Socialists needed such a declaration to cement their opposition to Groener. It was enough for them that he was a general. And they were right. For whatever we think of Groener as a person, he was and remained a general, and as Reichswehr Minister between 1928 and 1932 he covered up the whole illegal rearmament of the Army (which fact later was confirmed by letters he had written to the Prime Minister of Prussia, Otto Braun).

Groener's unpopularity with the Nazis and the Nazi-minded generals rose sky high, when the Minister declared, on January 29, 1929: "Fundamentally it is the honorable privilege of every German to serve the Fatherland as a soldier. Unfortunately we are compelled to draw the line where certain personalities are concerned. For political reasons applicants to the Army must be refused admission if it is proved that they have engaged in anti-Constitutional activities, for this means anti-defense activities."

He was again referring, of course, to the Nazis and the Communists.

General Groener was in his late sixties when he suddenly married. His wife was a young woman, and six months after the wedding she bore a child. The other generals were horrified. The hasty marriage was bad enough; but now the general could be seen every day, walking along the Tirpitz Ufer, almost in front of the Reichswehr Ministry, pushing a baby carriage. This was too much. A general, a Reichswehr Minister, pushing a baby carriage in a public park.

Herr von Schleicher seized the first opportunity to disavow his fatherly old friend before the assembled Cabinet. All

at once no one wanted to have anything to do with Groener. The old man resigned.

He spent the last years of his life in solitude, devoting his time to historic military studies, writing two extremely important and intelligent books, *Feldherr wider Willen* and *Testament des Grafen Schlieffen*. He finally died in May, 1939, in a Potsdam hospital. Only one of his former friends among the generals appeared at his funeral.

Old Hindenburg was perhaps the hardest hit by Groener's decline. Hindenburg had liked the general and trusted him. His liking had gone so far that in 1931 Hindenburg drew up a testament in which he recommended Groener to the German people as his successor. It was Schleicher who persuaded Hindenburg to tear up this testament. He explained to Hindenburg that no officer in the Army would permit his wife to associate with Frau Groener.

Herr von Schleicher had his own ideas about who was to be Hindenburg's successor.

#### 4

Hindenburg remained for some time very much under Schleicher's influence. Still, it would be quite wrong to imagine that Hindenburg was already a slack, weak-minded old man who would do whatever unscrupulous generals or politicians asked him to do. Von Schleicher was soon to discover how false this view was.

During the war someone had had the idea of placing an enormous wooden statue of Hindenburg before the Victory Column in the center of Berlin. This statue was called the Iron Hindenburg, because the entire wooden figure was eventually supposed to be covered with iron nails. A small sum was charged for driving an iron nail into the statue, and it was hoped that Hindenburg's popularity (and the size of the statue) would net a considerable sum which could be used for financing the war. In spite of tremendous initial enthusiasm, the people of

Berlin could not be persuaded to cover the entire figure with nails. And so it stood for a long time in the center of Berlin, half wood, half iron, a sad indication of the transitoriness of fame. Finally it was hauled away to some city warehouse.

Hindenburg's fame after the war took approximately the same course. In the first months after the defeat his popularity was still enormous. Then people stopped talking about Hindenburg. To be sure, military experts both in Germany and the rest of the world knew that this man had performed extraordinary military feats; but a small literary and less expert group had already begun to circulate the legend that the great achievements of the war were not Hindenburg's but Ludendorff's—which story was enthusiastically confirmed in all of Ludendorff's writings. The fact that Hindenburg was afterward elected President of the Reich is no absolute proof that the people still had a high regard for him. His election was the consequence of the inability of both Democrats and Socialists to find even a popular candidate. Perhaps there was no such candidate. Furthermore, the election of Hindenburg was less a tribute to the old general than a tribute to the good old days.

But by the end of the twenties he was generally considered slightly "off." There are a host of anecdotes about him that seek to prove this. There is, for example, the true story about the dinner in the Berlin Rathaus, which Hindenburg attended. Everyone present wondered why the music was played so loudly that no one could talk. Old Hindenburg left the banquet punctually at a quarter to ten; all his life he had gone to bed at ten sharp. After he had gone the Mayor of Berlin confidentially explained that he had had the band play so loudly because no one could converse with Hindenburg.

From this period, too, dates a story that was retold frequently after Hitler became Chancellor. A man sat in the anteroom waiting for an audience with Hindenburg. He ate a sandwich and left the paper in which the sandwich had been wrapped lying on the table. Whereupon one of Hindenburg's



aides rushed over and snatched up the paper, saying: "If Hindenburg sees that, he'll sign it immediately."

Perhaps all these stories stem from a remark of the famous Berlin University history instructor, Professor Hans Delbrueck.

It was Delbrueck who had headed the Reichstag Commission to investigate the question of war guilt. Delbrueck had declared that old Hindenburg could not be considered guilty since he had no idea what had gone on during the war, anyhow. But it would be a serious mistake to believe that Hindenburg was slightly "off" at that time. True, he made mistakes such as the time he arranged for the son of the Crown Prince to go to the maneuvers. But he was a man to learn from his errors. Many of the reactionary politicians close to his heart had urged him to select a man from the extreme Right for the post of a Reichswehr Minister after Gessler's fall. But Hindenburg had not done it. The fact that he had agreed with Schleicher on the choice of Groener shows that the old man had learned how far he could go and what he could not risk. He knew that, at the time, a real reactionary in such an important post would have been intolerable to the majority of the people. This, too, was perhaps why he had proposed Groener as his successor.

There are many other proofs that at this time Hindenburg was in full possession of his senses. There is, for example, his relationship with the Socialist Prime Minister of Prussia, Otto Braun. It did not seem likely that a limited old man who hated the Socialists as did Hindenburg could co-operate with Otto Braun. But he did. He got on perfectly well with the Socialist. And though Braun had, of course, to resort to many a petty ruse, it was not necessary for him to make calamitous compromises. Old Hindenburg had a very good sense of what could and what could not be done.

But his decisive achievement during these years was undoubtedly the "discovery" of Joachim von Ribbentrop.

In the winter of 1930, shortly before the end of the year, Hindenburg delivered a radio address in which he explicitly said that he himself had taken up the question of the rearma-

ment of Germany and that in the course of the new year Germany would once more take her rightful position in the world. That is, she would once more be armed.

The speech was couched in general terms, and no one paid much attention to it. It was similar to the speeches of a dozen statesmen in recent years. But behind Hindenburg's words there was more than a vague wish; there was a definite course of action. This action has never been written about. But intimates of Hindenburg, including old Field Marshal von Mackensen, have talked a good deal about it in private.

From 1929 on, Hindenburg had been convinced that the method of rearmament hitherto practiced could not go on indefinitely. Germany had been "secretly" rearming. And foreign intelligence services naturally knew about it, and Hindenburg knew that they knew. Each successive French War Minister in every address to the Chamber of Deputies always referred to a dossier prepared by the *Deuxième Bureau* (the French military espionage and counter-espionage service) in which all the details of German rearmament were described.

Hindenburg believed that foreign spies were undoubtedly presenting a false and exaggerated picture of German rearmament. He felt that France and England would be relieved if they were informed of the truth.

Moreover, he argued, the General Staffs of France and England could not possibly believe that the Versailles Treaty was immutable. They must realize that Germany could not be kept weaponless forever. As old soldiers they must also realize, Hindenburg argued, that war was unavoidable in the long run.

To all these arguments Hindenburg added what to him were the clinching points: international solidarity among soldiers, and fairness. These were very similar to the ideas General von Seeckt had expressed when he hoped France and England would permit an expansion of the Reichswehr. But for Seeckt this idea had been only a means to an end, while old Hindenburg probably had a certain touching faith in the idea.

Hindenburg also relied on the pacifist currents in England and

on the low opinion most people seemed to have of the Versailles Treaty. He knew that in England at that time the tendency was strong to break France's superiority on the Continent and restore the old European balance of power. On the other hand, French foreign policy was completely dependent upon London.

There was only one difficulty, as Hindenburg saw it. In England the General Staff had no political influence whatsoever. And since both the French and the British Governments (and the German Government, too, for that matter) were backing the League of Nations and talking constantly about disarmament—even if they actually had no intention of disarming—any appeal to the General Staffs of England or France had to be unofficial. Hindenburg therefore decided to conduct these appeals personally. His action was similar to what an absolute monarch would have done in the same situation. He did not trouble to inform the Reichstag or to employ ordinary diplomatic channels.

He sent Herr von Ribbentrop, at that time an unknown in Germany, to London. There is some disagreement as to how he came to choose von Ribbentrop. Certainly, he came from another world than the old President. Possibly one of the Rhine-land industrialists had his hand in the game; possibly Oscar von Hindenburg, his son, arranged his first meeting with von Ribbentrop. At any rate, Ribbentrop was the son-in-law of Henkel, the great champagne merchant who had excellent business and social connections in England. He seemed to be the man for the job. And he did not disappoint Hindenburg. He made important contacts and was able to reassure the members of the French and British General Staffs, who in turn reassured their political leaders.

In view of the existing state of German rearmament, they may well have been justified in giving such reassurances. The sad part of it was that the statesmen of England and France were so completely reassured that they were no longer capable of

worrying when, a few years later, Hitler began to rearm at an entirely different pace.

Shortly after Ribbentrop's entrance into the higher, though unofficial, realm of politics, another man appeared on the scene. This man, who was later to play a crucial part, was Franz von Papen.

Herr von Papen was a rich man and a charming one. He had many connections and he was freely admitted to the feudal clubs of the officers and to the society of the generals. But no one took him seriously. Not the least reason for this attitude was his disastrous diplomatic career in America, where he had been a military attaché before and during the last war, and the unofficial head of German espionage. In the United States his stupidity and unskillfulness had enabled the British and American counter-espionage to secure valuable information on German activities.

The German Chancellor, Heinrich Brüning, refused to have anything to do with Herr von Papen. He did not even want to give the ambitious man the post of Minister to Luxembourg. Evidently Brüning thought that von Papen did not have the necessary qualifications.

It was just then that Schleicher decided to back von Papen. From his point of view it was a clever move. Herr von Papen was a nobody. Herr von Papen was responsible to no one. Herr von Papen would be a figurehead who would obey implicitly the man who had advanced him.

Schleicher took von Papen to Hindenburg. And Hindenburg, who knew little of von Papen's past, was delighted with this charming gentleman.

Hindenburg and Schleicher had already agreed that Chancellor Brüning would have to be dropped. The reason was the "Eastern Aid Scandal."

One of the first tasks that the National Assembly had to face in 1919—the first legislature formed after the Revolution—was to devise an intelligent new settlement code. Such a settlement code would apply principally to *Ostelbien*. That is, the

tremendous estates of the Junkers were to be split up and much of the land that had hitherto lain fallow was to be placed at the disposal of the peasants.

The Junkers had managed to prevent the execution of these proposals. In fact, they had gone a good deal further than that. When the Reichstag appropriated large sums of money for "Eastern Aid"—that is, to finance the project of setting up small estates—the Junkers had obtained the major part of the money for themselves. Nor had they used it to pay off the enormous debts and mortgages that encumbered their estates. Instead, they had simply pocketed the money or used it for personal expenditures. Bruening had threatened to expose this scandal. Bruening also intended to divide up more than two thousand large estates in eastern Germany.

The East Elbian Junkers rushed to Hindenburg. This was Bolshevism pure and simple. Hindenburg was properly outraged. But Hindenburg had not always thought so. After the war he had even signed a proclamation in which the soldiers were promised land on which to settle. Then he had acted as many great army leaders in history have done, leaders who wanted their soldiers to be provided for. Now he was outraged. Divide those large debt-ridden estates in eastern Germany? Never. How dare they try to treat his friends in this highhanded manner? Especially when he himself was more or less one of them. For his "good old friends" had cunningly contrived to place him in the same boat with themselves. As a token of their regard they had presented him with a large estate—Neudeck: a castle and twenty thousand acres of land. Some had called it a bribe. *Honi soit qui mal y pense!*

Therefore, Bruening had to go. The Eastern Aid Scandal, or rather the avoidance of a scandal, was the ostensible cause and certainly the immediate pretext. But there was probably a deeper reason. Bruening had hoped and worked for general disarmament and peaceful co-operation within Europe. He simply was not the man for the generals.

It may be objected that he had never been their man. Few

of the Chancellors of the Republic had been their men. But it must not be forgotten that the generals had grown cautious after three unsuccessful putsches. For years they had kept out of the limelight. But in 1932 there was something in the air. A change was imminent. They could risk now what they had not dared risk earlier.

Schleicher concluded the negotiations with Papen. Remarkably enough, all their dealings were through a third person; they did not see each other personally. This third party was a general who was to be heard from a good deal in the near future.

This man was General Gerd von Rundstedt.

Gerd von Rundstedt, tall, slender, with a mask instead of a face—as was true of most of his comrades—was already nearing sixty. Born of ancient East Elbian nobility, he was a typical representative of the officer caste. At twelve he had been a cadet, at seventeen a lieutenant. Then, after attending the Military Academy, he was appointed to the General Staff. In 1932 he was Commander of Military District III, Brandenburg-Berlin—in other words, the military commander of the German capital. As such, he was faced with a difficult task after Bruening fell and Papen was appointed Chancellor.

With the sanction and co-operation of Hindenburg, von Schleicher, and the entire generals' clique, Papen had decided to begin his regime with a little coup. He wanted to get rid of the partly Socialist Government of Prussia; this government might well oppose all of Papen's plans.

Prussia was an independent state within Germany and its largest, with its own government which needed a majority in the Prussian legislature. The Prussian legislature at that time could have supplied a majority only if either the National Socialists or the Communists had voted for the Government, or if one of the two parties had refrained from voting. But both the Socialists and the Communists voted against the Government, so that the Government no longer had a majority. The Braun Government resigned. But since the Communists and

Nazis (and some small anti-Government parties of the Right) naturally could not agree to form a government, the old government continued in power temporarily. By the middle of 1932, this state of affairs had persisted for over a year.

Now Herr von Papen decided to make the most of the situation by assigning a Commissioner, appointed by the German Government—that is, by himself—to rule over Prussia. This maneuver was possible only through the stupidity of the Socialists and Communists, who in that moment of danger were not able to form a united front against fascism.

Since the Government of Prussia was established by the Constitution and enjoyed the confidence of the majority of the Prussian voters, the only way it could be deposed was by decree. Herr von Papen issued such a decree and the military commander of Berlin, General von Rundstedt, was ordered to carry it out.

The population of Berlin and almost everyone else expected the Prussian Government to defend itself. That would not have been too difficult; the Berlin police were under the control of the Prussian Minister of the Interior, and they were both reliable Republicans and a good fighting force. The Prussian Government simply did nothing. It had no wish to fight. The members declared bombastically that they were “yielding to force.” But there was no need of force.

General von Rundstedt might have seized the opportunity to show that he was not afraid of using force. He might have taken a couple of regiments, occupied the Prussian Ministries, and arrested the Ministers. Instead, he merely telephoned the Ministers and informed them that they had been deposed. At their request, he then sent them a written confirmation. The written statement had the name of the Berlin Police President spelled incorrectly; there was also a wrong date. The Prussian Government sent it back. With angelic patience Herr von Rundstedt had the errors corrected and once more sent the statement to the Government. Thereupon the Prussian Government

considered itself "deposed"; the members took their hats and left.

More important than the fact that these Republicans uncomplainingly abandoned their last position of power in the Republic was the fact that Herr von Rundstedt did not use force. Even as late as 1932, the generals did not want any unnecessary publicity, any notice of themselves. It was not so much good taste that induced Herr von Rundstedt to play the game with the bureaucrats. It was the Army tradition of remaining behind the scenes.

## 5

Herr von Papen governed. Herr von Papen enjoyed the confidence and friendship of old Hindenburg. But aside from that, he was about the most unpopular man in Germany.

This was quite in line with von Schleicher's ideas. Under Herr von Papen, Schleicher had become Reichswehr Minister. Those in the know realized that this meant little change. For even while Groener still held office Schleicher had been *de facto* the first man in the Reichswehr Ministry.

But now he was emerging more and more into the public eye. He was seen everywhere in Berlin. He appeared at every important Max Reinhardt opening. He dined with the editors of the great democratic newspapers. He played bridge with Emanuel Lasker. He began to be what no general should be, according to the tradition, a public figure. And as it became increasingly evident that Papen would not be able to hold office long, it also became obvious whom Schleicher had chosen for his successor. Schleicher was convinced that his time had come.

He had prepared well for this moment, prepared for it for many years. He knew that he, a general, would automatically be opposed by the liberals and bitterly attacked by the parties of the Left. He knew, too, that the Nazis would be against him; after all, they wanted power themselves.

But the contradiction between the Army and the Republic did not seem insoluble to him. He saw an immediate and simple



solution: the "people's army." With a people's army one could kill two birds with a single stone. He could eliminate the contradiction and destroy forever the threat of the Nazi Army, the SA and the SS.

Schleicher approached the liberals, especially those who controlled the democratic press. And he persuaded them to help him in a publicity campaign for himself, the "socialist general," the "only real liberal in the Reichswehr Ministry."

He devoted special attention to Theodor Wolff, editor of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, the most important democratic newspaper in Germany and one of the best newspapers in the world. At this time Theodor Wolff was an old man who probably had no conception of the extent of Schleicher's intrigues. Or, even if he did understand them, he may have decided that Schleicher was better than Hitler. In any case, Theodor Wolff willingly helped Schleicher in his efforts to get in touch with certain circles in France.

Late in 1931 Theodor Wolff went to Paris. His mission was to convince the French that Schleicher was a different kind of general. Wolff pointed out that Schleicher was not interested in building up the Army for wars or conquests. He wanted a strong army as an instrument to win and hold political power. Perhaps there was a certain amount of truth in this. In any case, Theodor Wolff informed the French that Herr von Schleicher wanted a people's army, an army in which all classes of Germans would be represented; an army that would no longer be controlled solely by Junkers. Such an army, Schleicher assumed, ought to please the French. To create such an army he needed the introduction of compulsory military service, and for that he needed the consent of the French.

Theodor Wolff therefore delivered lectures on Schleicher, in the houses of prominent Frenchmen, particularly those liberal politicians who were interested in Franco-German co-operation. The prospects seemed good, but in the end Aristide Briand brusquely turned down the whole proposition. For Briand did not share Wolff's faith in Schleicher's intentions. He feared

that once Schleicher had his big people's army he would not use it for political and democratic purposes alone.

Briand's suspicion was justified. For almost at the very hour that Wolff went to Paris—on October 8, 1931—General von Schleicher, through the medium of General von Epp, invited Hitler to lunch at his home. The luncheon ended, according to Colonel von Bredow, in perfect agreement. Hitler agreed not to incorporate the SA in the Reichswehr; he promised Schleicher that even after he took power the Reichswehr would not be touched. In return, Schleicher promised to support Hitler from that time on.

But von Schleicher still had another iron in the fire. Herr von Schleicher had an excellent memory. He recalled that the SA had not always stood one hundred per cent behind Hitler. In April, 1931, there had been a Berlin SA revolt—Hitler's storm troopers had not been paid for a long time. And the leader of that revolt, Walter Stennes, together with a number of other dissidents, had left the SA and the Party. Stennes then had turned to Schleicher and offered to create a kind of anti-SA organization for him. The foundation for his opposition SA was to consist of former storm troopers. These would undoubtedly draw many of their former SA comrades into the new organization. And the anti-SA could be used against the old SA in street battles and in brawls at public meetings. The old SA could be damaged physically and it would no longer be able to terrorize the populace.

At the time, Schleicher reckoned that such an undertaking would cost three million marks. He approached the Prussian Government, hoping to obtain the money out of Prussia's secret funds. When that proved impossible he arranged a meeting among certain Berlin bankers, merchants, and industrialists and asked them to help him raise the three millions. But all he collected was eighteen thousand marks. He was forced to abandon the project.

Now, late in 1932, there seemed to him a possibility of reviving this plan. Stennes by that time had emigrated to China.

So Schleicher got in touch with some of his former intimate collaborators. Detailed plans were worked out. Most of the money was collected. But events moved too quickly. Before Schleicher could complete his organization of the anti-SA, Herr von Papen fell and he himself became Chancellor of Germany.

The democratic press rejoiced, very mistakenly, but it did not rejoice for long. For the entire Schleicher regime lasted only eight weeks.

From the first, Schleicher tried to present himself as democratic, liberal, popular. But it soon turned out that the masses in Germany did not believe him any more than Briand had believed him. No one took him seriously when he said such things as: "The Reichswehr does not exist to protect outmoded property relationships." No one believed in his social tendencies.

However, Schleicher was willing to prove that his intentions were serious. To that end, he revived the famous resettlement idea which had led to Bruening's fall. Naturally, Schleicher did not intend to bring about another scandal. Nor did he have any idea of dividing up two million acres of land; he would be content with parceling out eight hundred thousand acres. But to the Junkers even this was monstrous. On January 11, 1933, they arranged a conference with Hindenburg at which they protested fiercely against Schleicher and his methods. The Junkers and the generals were sadly disappointed in Schleicher. As they saw it, one of their own men had become a traitor to his class. That was what happened when a general mixed with politicians and politics; when a general tried to get along with liberals and make himself popular. .

The Schleicher case became a tragi-comedy. He fell because the masses did not believe in his social aims and because his own caste did believe in them.

Hindenburg suddenly would have no more to do with him. Perhaps that was the influence of the Junkers—probably it was. But there is a significance to Schleicher's case that goes far beyond single causes and single intrigues. Schleicher fell because he had committed one of the seven deadly sins that a

German general could not commit. He had mixed in politics. Instead of maneuvering in the background, he had stepped forward to the footlights. He had taken a position of responsibility—a fundamental breach of the ethics of the officer caste. For one of their first principles had been never to take responsibility. Then, if something went wrong, the prestige of the Army would not suffer.

The case of Schleicher was once more the tragedy of the sorcerer's apprentice. Not a man in Germany had had so much power during the post-war years as Herr von Schleicher. No one else had the power he had to decide, almost by himself, who could govern and who could not. Schleicher knew the magic spell. But when he wanted to use it for himself, when he wanted to release in his own interests the magic forces he controlled, the formula no longer worked.

No one reigned behind the scenes for so long as Schleicher. And no one stood before the curtain for so short a time as Schleicher.

## 6

Schleicher's downfall was sealed by a group he had no longer included in his calculations: the Nazis.

In those days Adolf Hitler was already a has-been. In the Reichstag elections of November 6, 1932, his Party had lost thirty-four seats. Thirty-four seats out of 230. That was more than a defeat; it was a collapse. Everywhere, from all over the Reich, came reports that the Nazi Party was breaking up. There was no more money to pay the storm troopers. The Party was buried in debts. Gregor Strasser, perhaps the most important man in the Party next to Adolf Hitler, had broken with the Fuehrer. Only a miracle could save Hitler.

That miracle, remarkably enough, came about through one of the generals: Werner von Blomberg. Herr von Blomberg was one of the few generals who had been associated with the Nazis for some time. He was, therefore, the general whom the Junkers usually sent to represent them at conferences with

the Nazis. The East Elbians did not doubt that the Army could handle Hitler himself. But there was that knotty question of agrarian reform. In a mass party like Hitler's it was a difficult business. There was that damnable Point 17 in the Party Program, which read: "We demand an agrarian reform suitable to our national needs." What position would Hitler take on this paragraph of his program, if he were allowed to take power?

There was also Franz von Papen.

Herr von Papen, furious that Schleicher had intrigued him out of office, decided to pay Schleicher back in his own coin. Along with Herr von Blomberg, he thus became the man who gave Hitler his great chance.

Hitler understood. At that moment it was a matter of "to be or not to be" for him. He would have made far greater compromises than the one of the question of agrarian reform.

And that was the end of it. Or the beginning.

Herr von Schleicher made one last attempt. On January 28, when Hindenburg dismissed him, he spoke to representatives of the Catholic and Social Democratic unions. He proposed a general strike and promised the support of the Reichswehr. Some of the union leaders were willing. Others wanted to consider the matter.

Then Schleicher had a conference with some of the generals. He was planning nothing more or less than a coup d'état. On January 30, the garrison of Potsdam was to march through the Brandenburger Tor. He would declare a state of siege in Berlin; at the same time a general strike would break out. Papen and Hitler would be placed in protective custody. Hindenburg would be faced with a *fait accompli*.

Papen heard of the proposal, probably from Colonel von Bredow, who naïvely saw no reason for keeping it secret. Herr von Papen rushed to Hindenburg with the story. That was on Sunday, January 29, 1933. Hindenburg was very angry. Schleicher had committed the one sin the old Field Marshal could not forgive. Insubordination. For such a thing a man

should be placed against the wall and shot. And he used these very words to Schleicher.

Hindenburg sent for Hitler. Hitler was now the Man of the Hour. Hindenburg was no longer as gruff as he had formerly been. He no longer mentioned the "Bohemian Corporal."

## 7

Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. Starting from the very first day, Hitler took more and more power for himself. He governed dictatorially, he governed by releasing his gangs in the streets, he governed by setting fire to the Reichstag.

But he did not govern the Army. From the beginning the officers succeeded in preventing the Party from interfering with the affairs of the Army. On May 4, 1933, three months after Hitler became Chancellor, he was compelled to sign Paragraph 26 of the Armed Forces Law. This provided that every member of the Party must give up his Party membership when he entered the Army. As a matter of fact, not a single Party member was active officially in the Army until World War II. And, needless to say, none of the generals who had not yet joined the Party saw any reason for doing so now.

For the time being, Hitler could tolerate such a situation. But there was another man who could not tolerate it. This was Ernst Roehm, the leader of the SA.

Roehm felt, justifiably, that he had been passed by. He told his friends that Hitler had again and again promised that he would incorporate the SA into the Reichswehr and make him, Roehm, the organizer of this new, great Army, as well as War Minister of the Third Reich.

Roehm had twice distinguished himself as organizer of the SA. It seemed strange to him that for the third time his best friend should not assign him a similar task.

For the present Roehm waited. He knew very well, of course, that neither old Hindenburg nor the generals were very fond of him. But a few months more or less didn't matter.

In the fall of 1933 Roehm, together with Hess, was appointed a Cabinet Minister. He considered this a good sign. Sunday after Sunday he held parades or maneuvers for his SA. He managed to get the Reichswehr to send details to these parades, and the Reichswehr soldiers paraded under the various Nazi group leaders. One day, Berlin Group Leader Ernst complained to Herr von Fritsch that the detail from the Reichswehr had behaved too snobbishly. He asked that in the future no more officers with monocles be sent. Fritsch, a man who never removed his monocle, was furious. But Hitler didn't feel like giving any opinion on the affair. For the time being, the Fuehrer waited.

And then, suddenly, there was no longer any time to wait. In the early summer of 1934 Professor Sauerbruch reported that Hindenburg was critically ill; there was no hope for him. At the same time Hitler received other news almost equally disturbing. One report dealt with a number of generals who had also heard of Hindenburg's critical illness. They now intended to persuade the dying man to appoint one of their own group President and Commander in Chief of the Army. Ironically enough, the generals picked General von Blomberg who would have thus become boss. Ironically, also, it was von Blomberg who informed Hitler of these plans. Obviously von Blomberg was not inclined to become President against Hitler's will; he had no desire to incur the enmity of the Fuehrer.

The second important report that Hitler received was through General von Reichenau. It concerned negotiations between SA Chief Roehm and General von Schleicher; the subject under discussion was a reorganization of the Reichswehr and the incorporation of the SA into the Reichswehr. Herr von Reichenau was, as a matter of fact, only a messenger. The man who had sent him was Ludwig Beck.

Hitler had to act. And he acted quickly.

After Hitler took power, Herr von Schleicher had retired to his villa at Wannsee, the most elegant suburb of Berlin, and waited to see what would happen. He had made no particular

effort to be cautious. He went to Berlin almost every day, visited the finer restaurants as usual, and attended openings at the theaters. Occasionally he made remarks about Hitler in a voice considerably above a whisper, and the things he said were none too friendly.

He let himself go completely in this respect when he went to his tailor's for a fitting. His tailor, G. Benedikt, ran a big, elegant establishment; most of the big industrialists, bankers, and Junkers ordered their clothes from him. There, in the little fitting-rooms, Schleicher had long discussions with his friends and applied terms to Hitler that are not fit to print. Whenever the anxious proprietor asked him to be careful, he laughed loudly and declared that Hitler was too cowardly to lay a hand on him, and that anyway Hitler would not live much longer.

Around this time many of the people who had helped bring about Hitler's success were already beginning to worry. What would be the end of this thing? But none of them was so careless of his life as to proclaim his views openly as Schleicher did.

Schleicher knew perfectly well that even in alliance with the discontented industrialists he would have a hard time removing Hitler now that he was firmly in the saddle. He mournfully remembered Stennes' efforts to form an anti-SA. It was too late for that now, of course. Schleicher was therefore all the more pleased when his agents within the SA reported that many of the SA men were dissatisfied, and of them all, Roehm was the most disappointed.

It is a moot question—and since all the participants are now dead it will probably always remain unsettled—whether Roehm went to Schleicher or Schleicher to Roehm, or whether the negotiations were carried on through an intermediary. In any case, there were negotiations. The ideas of the two men were, strangely enough, quite similar. Both wanted the thing that Schleicher had called a People's Army; neither one wanted a real, democratic people's army, but an army with a popular sub-



structure that could be used for their own personal purposes.

The negotiations were only in their initial stages when Ludwig Beck heard about them and saw to it that the Fuehrer was informed.

Later, it was often said that these well-brought-up generals, with their strict code of what should and what should not be done by a gentleman, simply could not tolerate Ernst Roehm. Roehm was a "tough guy"—a mercenary soldier. Moreover, he was a homosexual and, worst of all, he surrounded himself with perverts and used his position of power in the SA and the Hitler Youth to obtain sexual gratification. But nothing is further from the truth than to assume that the generals were moved to get rid of Roehm because of moral outrage or repugnance.

The man who more than any other was responsible for the removal of Roehm and therefore for the bloody 30th of June, 1934, was Ludwig Beck. It is quite possible that Beck, in conversation, hinted that old Hindenburg was horrified by the escapades of the SA chief. But by this time Hindenburg was already a dying man. There is no doubt that nothing concerned Ludwig Beck and his friends less than the sexual habits or the manners of Ernst Roehm. In fact, we have it on good authority that Beck considered Roehm extraordinarily competent General Staff material. Had Roehm been willing to work under Beck on the General Staff, Beck would have taken him on at once. What disturbed Beck and his associates was that this gifted militarist wanted to organize a gang of assassins and that he preferred such an organized gang to the Army. Therefore, Roehm must go.

Beck never proposed to Hitler, either directly or indirectly, that Roehm should be killed. His only demand was that the SA be destroyed as an independent military force. Beck's whole way of thinking was averse to murder and bloodshed. This was Hitler's own personal footnote to the whole business.

The preparations for June 30 took eight days. They were begun on June 20 and completed by June 28. In essence, the

preparations consisted in drawing up blacklists. These blacklists were mainly the work of Goering, Himmler, Reinhard Heydrich, and a man named Werner Best.

On the night of June 29, Goering had a talk with General von Rundstedt and gave him his first hint of the whole affair. Goering asked him for soldiers to carry out the action. What action? Rundstedt asked. Goering said he thought the General knew all about it; special measures in the interests of the Reichswehr—and even in its behalf—were being planned. Rundstedt knew nothing. Goering referred to a speech of the Fuehrer on March 23 in which Hitler had declared that in the future the Reichswehr would be the only armed force in the Reich. The purpose of tomorrow's action, Goering explained, was to make that promise a reality.

Rundstedt said he would have to discuss the matter with General von Witzleben. Shortly afterward he telephoned Goering and declared that he had nothing against the action in principle, but that he could not supply the soldiers. He would, however, immediately order the barracks of the Berlin guard regiment to place the necessary weapons at the disposal of the SS.

That same night several trucks were loaded with Goering's men and they rode to Moabit, where they received rifles and machine guns from the Reichswehr. General von Witzleben personally supervised the transfer. Every weapon delivered was carefully noted. According to the agreement, they were all to be returned by July 5. This was, in fact, done.

The center for the purge of June 30, 1934, was, strangely enough, the former cadet school of Lichterfelde. In two classrooms on the first floor of the main building sat Party judges Walther Buch and Willi Grimm with a jury of the Highest Party Court—the members had arrived in planes from Munich. The arrests of SA men were supervised by Goering personally and most of them were carried out by his Guard Battalions. The Gestapo was there to receive the arrested men, bring them before the Court, and carry out the executions.

The "trials" of most of the accused lasted between two and three minutes. The accused were given no hearing; they were not asked what they had to say in their own defense. After sentence was passed they were taken out into the yard and stood against the wall. When a man fell, a little straw was thrown over him and the next immediately took his place. Corpses piled up.

Some executions took place in the courtyard of the Propaganda Ministry, where they were carried out by the House Guard. And the few clerks who were present in the Ministry that afternoon—it was a Saturday—were ordered into the corridors and told to watch the shootings from the windows.

Hitler himself had gone to Wiessee, a spa in the vicinity of Munich, where he personally supervised the murder of Roehm, Heines, and a few other prominent SA leaders.

But that was not all.

At twelve noon on June 30 the Berlin Bureau of the *New York Times* received a telephone call from a tipster who declared that an SS detachment was on its way to Wannsee to arrest General von Schleicher in his villa on the Alsenstrasse. A photographer, a reporter, and another representative of the *Times* immediately drove out to Wannsee. When they entered the Alsenstrasse they saw two green SS cars standing in front of Schleicher's house.

The property was surrounded by a high hedge, so that from the street it was impossible to see what was happening in the backyard or in the front garden. But the *Times* men could hear excited shouts, then the screams of a woman. Then there was a single shot, and then two more.

Immediately thereafter seven SS men came out of the front entrance. Two were carrying rifles. Five, revolvers. The *New York Times* photographer quickly took several shots of the murderers, sprang back to his car, and raced away with the accelerator down to the floor. The SS roared after, in pursuit, but soon gave up. However, the photographer's car was stopped

later in the city and ordered to Police Headquarters on Alexanderplatz. On the way the photographer managed to escape from the car, develop the pictures, and make a number of prints. These prints he immediately sent abroad with a friend. Shortly afterward, the police searched the offices of the *New York Times* and confiscated the negatives. Pressure from the American Consul soon resulted in the release of the arrested reporters, but the Nazis afterward expelled them from the country.

Colonel von Bredow was also killed, on July 1. Perhaps because he was an intimate friend of Schleicher, perhaps also because he had been practicing a form of blackmail ever since Hitler took over. He knew enough from his years in the military intelligence service, it seemed, to compromise Hitler and completely ruin him.

Franz von Papen also was very nearly one of the victims on June 30. There are a dozen versions as to why this was so. In any case, Goering rescued him, at the last minute, from his own cellar where the Gestapo had beaten him mercilessly. By then, Papen no longer had a single tooth left in his mouth.

Did the generals know that Herr von Schleicher was to be one of the victims? Or did Hitler and Goering, who after all did not want to rid themselves of their own men only, put his name on the list after it had been drawn up?

These questions can never be answered with certainty. But we may assume that the generals had never intended one of their own to be murdered in such a manner. The shooting of a general could not be a good precedent in the eyes of the other generals. Many of the officers were against Schleicher and they had old scores to settle with him. He had broken the code; he had gone too far. But having him shot—by murderers—that was not the sort of thing they wanted.

And as far as Schleicher's wife went—women were never shot. Certainly not the wife of a general. It simply wasn't done. And when it was done, the generals were outraged.

## 8

All in all, Ludwig Beck, the spiritual father of the purge, could feel well content. Roehm was out of the way. And Beck had gotten even more than he asked. Many other SA leaders were out of the way as well. Still, Ludwig Beck was worried. He was by no means convinced that the execution of the SA leaders was any more than an elimination of men who had stood in Hitler's way. There was no proof that the purge of June 30 meant the final destruction of the SA as a military force.

But that was exactly what Beck wanted of Hitler. He wanted to force Hitler to declare publicly and solemnly that the Reichswehr was the sole military force in Germany. During the days following June 30 there were a good many earnest conferences between Ludwig Beck and Hitler. "Official conferences," Beck explained to his friends with a cynical smile—for he was proud that he had never spoken a word in private to Hitler. Finally Hitler promised that in his Reichstag speech of July 13, he would make the public statement Beck demanded.

Beck then did something wholly unusual to make sure the Fuehrer would keep his promise. He ordered nine thousand men into the Government District around the Wilhelmstrasse. Nine thousand soldiers camped in the garden of the President's Palace, in and around the former Prussian Ministry of State, in the garden of the Herrenhaus, in the former Mosse Building, and in the Voss Strasse. They were distributed carefully so that the public did not notice them. But Hitler could see them very clearly from the various windows of the Chancellory. General Beck was sure the soldiers would impress him. And apparently they did. In any case, on July 13 Hitler declared to the Reichstag:

"For fourteen years I have stated consistently that the fighting organizations of the Party are political institutions and that they have nothing to do with the Army.... In the State there is only one bearer of arms, and that is the Army; there is only

one bearer of political will, and that is the National Socialist Party."

Outwardly, June 30 was a tremendous victory for Hitler. Then, and for a long time afterward, this was the belief of most of the world. But June 30 had the blessing of the Army and was a victory for the Army. The Army had gotten rid of the threat of the SA.

It was to be the Army's last victory.

It later became a subject of much speculation whether old Hindenburg had approved of what happened on June 30, or, better perhaps, if he would have approved had he known. To be sure, there was a telegram in which he congratulated Goering in his capacity as Prime Minister of Prussia, for his "energetic and successful smashing of treason." But it is more than doubtful that Hindenburg ever saw that telegram. By June 30 he was already a dying man and at least partially paralyzed. It is doubtful if the telegram was ever sent by him. Perhaps it was sent by his son, Oscar von Hindenburg, who decidedly took his orders from Hitler. The old Field Marshal von Mackensen tried in vain to get in touch with Hindenburg on and after June 30. He had hoped to persuade his old comrade to put a stop to the murders. He was simply told that the President was too ill to see anybody.

No matter whether von Mackensen or anybody else hoped that Hindenburg would act as a check on Hitler, there was no use to speculate upon this possibility for the future or upon the future relationship of Hindenburg and Hitler. For Hindenburg died.

The public was not informed that there was no longer any hope for the President until the end of July. Hitler called all his Cabinet members back from their vacations. On August 1 Hindenburg suffered a stroke. When Hitler received word of this, he went to Neudeck—in order, he declared, to take leave of Germany's great soldier. He entered the dying man's room alone, although he had arrived at Neudeck with his friend, Hanfstaengel. Hindenburg's son and daughter-in-law,

as well as the doctors, withdrew. By then, the old man had been unconscious for a long time. Nevertheless, Hitler later admitted reluctantly, in a voice choked with sorrow, that Hindenburg had awakened once from his coma, shaken hands with him, and had then fallen asleep again.

Death came at nine o'clock on August 2. The house flag was set at half mast. Everyone who had known the old general was aware that Hindenburg had repeatedly expressed the desire to be buried without ceremony. But Hitler could not refrain from holding a gigantic funeral ceremony in Tannenberg—the site of Hindenburg's greatest victory. Hitler himself delivered the funeral oration, in which he declared that Hindenburg would be taken into Valhalla. The whole affair was as Wagnerian as possible—exactly as the dead man would not have wished it. For it was also as un-Prussian as possible. But who cared about that?

The old man was dead.

And then began the famous hunt for the will.

Had Hindenburg left a will? And if so, why was it not brought forth immediately?

Those who had been close to the dead President knew definitely of that first testament in which Hindenburg had recommended Groener as his successor. They knew, too, that he had torn up this testament. They were also almost certain that Hindenburg had drawn up a second testament in which he had recommended Herr von Papen as his logical successor. It was by no means improbable, for Herr von Papen had been a friend of the household; he was on especially good terms with young Hindenburg and after Hitler's seizure of power more or less represented the conservative wing of the Government.

In any case, the testament was not found. And all sorts of whispers circulated that Hitler had suppressed it.

Everyone knew that Hitler had had Hindenburg's castle surrounded—by the Gestapo. It is not improbable that he also found and destroyed the testament. Otherwise, why did it take eleven days—until August 13—before the will was finally

"found"? Goebbels, who let another two days pass before he published it, let it be known that Hitler had done this out of piety.

In any case, Oscar von Hindenburg found the testament, gave it to Herr von Papen, who passed it on to Hitler. It did not take a stylistic expert to detect that the published will had not been composed by Hindenburg. It was a clumsy forgery. The style betrayed its Nazi authorship. Old Hindenburg would never have composed a phrase like: "the German nation as the standard-bearer of Occidental Culture."

Eleven days. . . . It has, of course, never been entirely established who got rid of Hindenburg's real testament and who manufactured the new one. The style was that of Goebbels. It was said later that the man who arranged it was none but Doctor Otto Meissner. Meissner had been the glorified private secretary of Ebert, the Socialist President of the Republic, and of his successor, Field Marshal Hindenburg. Everybody expected that he would be retired after Hindenburg's death. But no, it turned out that he stayed on and became to the Fuehrer what he had been to his predecessors. It is evident that he must have done some great service to Hitler. And it is also evident that Hindenburg's real testament would never have disappeared and a new testament been put in its place if Meissner had not been in the conspiracy.

It is more than probable that Oscar von Hindenburg also knew something and kept it to himself, for only shortly afterward when he retired, Hitler advanced him from colonel to lieutenant general which, at least, meant a higher pension.

In any case, the will suggested—in the interests of the welfare of the German nation—that Hitler was to be Hindenburg's successor.

And that is what happened. A few days later Hitler had the Army take the oath of loyalty to himself. "I swear to the Leader and Chancellor of the German fatherland, Adolf Hitler, everlasting loyalty."

Hitler had won his first victory over the Army.



## 9

At this time one of the few generals who had opposed Hitler from the beginning, Freiherr von Hammerstein-Equord, was already in retirement. Following Wilhelm Heye as Commander of the Reichswehr, he resigned on February 1, 1934, having reached the age limit. His successor was Freiherr Werner von Fritsch.

Herr von Hammerstein-Equord therefore had nothing to do officially with what took place thereafter, in particular the events of June 30, 1934. But he was a stubborn old gentleman who chose to interfere whenever he thought the honor of the Army or the officers corps was at stake. Herr von Hammerstein believed this to be the case after the blood purge.

On the morning of July 1 Frau von Bredow had telephoned von Hammerstein and asked him whether her husband was staying with him. Von Bredow, it seemed, had left the house a few hours before, to go to church, saying he would return shortly. She had already called Herr von Schleicher, she said, but no one had answered.

Von Hammerstein said he did not know where von Bredow was. Then he hung up, reached for his hat, and vanished from Berlin for several days. When everything had quieted down, he returned. But he did not intend to hold his peace.

He went directly to the Reichswehr Ministry to see General von Blomberg. What, he wanted to know, was von Blomberg going to do about the murder of their comrades, von Schleicher and von Bredow, by "criminal elements"?

Blomberg shrugged and remarked that excesses were sometimes unavoidable; there was nothing he could do about it. When, in parting, he held out his hand, General von Hammerstein stood up without a word and left the room.

Immediately after Hitler's Reichstag speech—some two weeks later—von Hammerstein went to Blomberg again. He declared that in this speech "Herr Hitler" had "talked nonsense and had sullied the good name of the Army." He de-

manded that the memories of General von Schleicher and Colonel von Bredow be cleared.

Again von Blomberg shrugged and said he could do nothing. And again von Hammerstein left in a huff. Outside, in the anteroom, he stated before a dozen witnesses: "This man worked with me in the Greater General Staff throughout the war. And now the praise of a corporal blinds him."

General von Hammerstein still had not given up. He made it his business to visit all the generals and rouse them to do something about the von Schleicher and von Bredow matter. He concentrated particularly on old Mackensen. Finally Fritsch, approached on every hand by the officers and asked whether anything was to be done, felt that he had to do something. Fritsch had a long talk with Blomberg; Blomberg had a long talk with Hitler.

In January, 1935, Hitler called a meeting of representatives of the Army, the Navy, and the Party in the Berlin State Opera House. During the meeting Hitler declared that the two officers who had died on June 30 had fallen as "innocent victims." Their murder was "a mistake."

Von Hammerstein made a point of not associating with his former comrades. He cut them whenever he could. He was utterly outraged by their behavior and considered them traitors to their caste. He said repeatedly to civilian friends that he hoped Hitler would some day kill off all the generals. "They don't deserve any better fate," he said.

Only once more did he have anything to do with a general. This was in 1939 at the funeral of General Groener. Von Hammerstein was the only officer who considered it necessary or who even dared to pay this last respect to an old and forgotten comrade.

## IO

It would be an exaggeration to consider these actions of Hammerstein's as rebellion. They were a protest. Another general almost started a rebellion. But only almost. This general was

Gerd von Rundstedt. Nothing has been published about it yet. It happened in the early months of 1935.

At the time, certain circles close to former German labor unions and to a group of statesmen in Western Europe asked the general whether he would be willing to attempt an overthrow of Hitler. For many reasons he was considered the right man for a coup—the decisive reason, of course, being that he was supposed to be far from enthusiastic about the Nazi regime. Von Rundstedt was the exact opposite of Schleicher's type. He was the unpolitical general par excellence. He stood for the "neutrality of the means of power." He was a monarchist, but he had discovered that it was possible to get along with the Social Democrats. The group that turned to him thought that he would actually prefer a Social Democratic government to one run by the Bohemian Corporal.

Strategic factors also played a part in their choice of von Rundstedt. He commanded the Army Group situated in the heart of the country. From there, not only Berlin and Brandenburg but the military districts of Hanover, Pomerania, East Prussia, and Hamburg were controlled. In the spring of 1935 Rundstedt had at his disposal sixteen infantry divisions, seven cavalry divisions, and two well-trained armored brigades under General Lutz.

Rundstedt was therefore the very man to conduct a revolt against Hitler—a revolt that stood a good chance of success. The men who approached him proposed to deposit 1,250,000 Swiss francs in a Swiss bank. Rundstedt or anyone empowered by him would have full control of the money at all times. In case the putsch succeeded the sum was to be used for the "reconstruction of Germany." In case of failure it would be at the disposal of the compromised officers who would, of course, have to flee abroad. In either case Rundstedt would not have to give an accounting for the money.

Rundstedt asked for time to consider. On May 2, 1935, he informed the men who had approached him that he was

agreed in principle. Immediately after the money was deposited, he would work out the general lines of the revolt.

It seemed to the men not without significance that the general had made his decision on May 2. On May 2, 1933—exactly two years before—Hitler had taken over all the labor unions, the very unions of the men who were now negotiating with Rundstedt. Rundstedt must have been aware of this. It seemed very possible that he intended his choice of date as a symbolic gesture.

The funds were immediately deposited in the Swiss bank, and as soon as Rundstedt received confirmation of the deposits he informed the plotters of his plan. It had been worked out with extreme care. Rundstedt demonstrated on a General Staff map just how he would strike.

"On July 15, I will have my troops occupy the Government buildings, the railroad stations, the waterworks, the gas and electric works of Berlin, Hanover, Stettin, Koenigsberg, Leipzig, and Dresden." He mentioned a number of other "strategic points" he intended to occupy. Everything was carefully marked out on individual maps of the cities in question. These city plans contained detailed marginal notes in his own handwriting. The scheme seemed sure to succeed.

During the next two months he kept his partners in the enterprise informed every week: everything was in order and July 15 was the day.

The men behind the plot had no reason to doubt the general's sincerity or the seriousness of his preparations. They had, of course, a number of agents in the Army who would have informed them of anything suspicious. Among other things they learned, toward the end of June, that certain military units under the commands of von Bock and von Leeb had been incorporated into Rundstedt's forces. They investigated to find out whether this regrouping had aroused any suspicion—assuming it had taken place at Rundstedt's instigation. Or whether the regrouping had not been ordered by Rundstedt but by

Hitler or one of his men—von Blomberg, say—and meant that Rundstedt was no longer trusted by them. But everything seemed quite in order. Rundstedt had asked for the troops, alleging that he needed them for the big maneuvers that had long been planned. No one had suspected anything.

On July 1 the men who had made the offer to Rundstedt learned that the general had had a long talk with another general stationed in East Prussia. This conversation had taken place on June 30, the anniversary of the murders of Generals von Schleicher and von Bredow. This seemed another good sign. The general with whom Rundstedt talked was then in command of the First Army Corps. According to the most reliable information he had already agreed to participate in the putsch. His name was Walter von Brauchitsch.

Such was the state of affairs on July 8.

On that day an adjutant of Rundstedt's telephoned the contact man and said the general was extremely worried. The contact man was rather astounded at this sudden change in the general's attitude, but he did not take it too seriously. He rather suspected that Rundstedt was preparing an alibi, in case the affair did not turn out a success.

On Monday, July 11, Lieutenant General von Witzleben, Rundstedt's own liaison man, appeared at a bank in Zurich and demanded a certified check for 1,250,000 Swiss francs. An hour later Herr von Witzleben delivered this check in a sealed envelope at a house in Zurich—an address Herr von Rundstedt had given in case he wanted to contact his partners outside Germany. An hour later Herr von Witzleben left Switzerland. He returned in the same plane that had brought him over. It was a plane belonging to the German Army.

Next morning all over Germany there were mass arrests, particularly of former union leaders and politicians who had opposed the Nazis before Hitler took power. That same evening the SA appeared on the streets—for the first time since June 30, 1934. There were countless organized excesses against the Jews. During the following days the excesses increased in fury

and ugliness, and the arrests mounted. On Friday the 15th, Rundstedt's putsch did not come off. Instead, Hitler issued a statement that peace and order must be observed and that no "spontaneous individual actions" would be tolerated. To ensure peace and order Hitler increased the police forces everywhere and appointed new police chiefs in a number of important cities. The new appointees were all Nazis; a good many of them were men who in the course of the past two years had been forced into the background because they stood less for peace and order than for spontaneous individual actions.

The police chief of Berlin was one of those removed. This news was read with great interest by Rundstedt's partners in the enterprise, who had escaped abroad in time. They remembered Rundstedt's answer when they raised the question: "How would the police behave?"

"My soldiers will easily take care of the police," he had said. "Moreover, I have the strongest police force in Germany, the Berlin police, behind me."

Not only the Berlin police chief, but many other officials in Berlin and throughout the Reich were removed, although most of them could not possibly have known anything about the plot.

But General von Rundstedt and the men around him were not removed. In fact, both his and von Brauchitsch's relations with Hitler improved. The German press, and in particular Hitler's official organ, the *Voelkischer Beobachter*, mentioned Rundstedt with increasing frequency during the following years. Not, of course, in connection with the putsch of July 15. Right in the midst of the campaign of arrests and dismissals Rundstedt was praised as a man who despite his political interests "has never in his life done anything that might give rise to the belief he would ever disregard his military duties in order to play a political role. But aside from Rundstedt's spotless military past, another factor that speaks against his ever allowing himself to be misled into playing any role other than that assigned by his Fuehrer is the fact that he belongs to that

Prussian military caste which considers military obedience the highest duty."

If, of course, the events preceding July 15, 1935, had become known, it might have been difficult to speak of Rundstedt's "spotless past." Or to say that he cherished "military obedience" above everything else. He would have liked to play a role other "than that assigned him by his Fuehrer." But at the last minute he probably lost his nerve. Perhaps, too, he would have preferred to keep the money. But he decided to give it back probably after having the check photographed. That was the safer course. It bound Hitler closer to him. It showed Hitler that he was better off placating his generals. The fact that Rundstedt, to save himself, had to betray a number of others did not stain his "spotless military past"—not so long as no one found out about it.

But this betrayal must have had results other than those Rundstedt expected. It showed the Fuehrer the sort of courage his generals possessed. Perhaps it was just as well to placate them. You could never know—

Rundstedt's putsch that never took place was the last attempt by any general to overthrow Hitler. The outcome of that attempt reveals the inner reason why later on, under incomparably more favorable circumstances, the generals did not revolt against the Nazi leader.

Courage is rare among the German generals. Most of them merely talk about it and demand it of their subordinates. They themselves are afraid. That does not mean they don't know how to die. But they are afraid.

PART IV

*THE WAR THEY WANTED*

*The soldier is drafted, clothed, armed, trained; he eats, drinks and marches, all this in order to fight at the right place at the right time.*

KARL VON CLAUSEWITZ





## DO GENERALS WANT WAR?

### I

LUDWIG BECK spent the spring and summer months of 1938, after Hitler's invasion of Austria, working with feverish intensity in the offices of the General Staff in the Bendlerstrasse. He was still Chief of Staff. It has been pointed out already how Hitler refused to accept Beck's resignation after von Fritsch and von Blomberg were dropped and Brauchitsch became head of the Army, while Keitel (Hitler's own man) became head of the entire armed forces. Hitler needed Beck. Only a few weeks before the invasion of Austria and a few months before the initiation of a greater project, he could not afford to let his Chief of Staff go.

Ludwig Beck worked hard, but during all those months he did not see Hitler once. Their only contact was through go-betweens or in writing. An almost open hostility had arisen between the two. Beck, who had formerly prided himself on never speaking a word in private to Hitler, had now brought the Fuehrer to the point where he did not speak with him, either.

The cause of this breach, which was silently overlooked by the other generals, was Beck's attempt to make Hitler do something which the Fuehrer did not want to do. It was not his first attempt.

The first time Beck forced Hitler's hand was, as has already been told, after the blood purge, in July, 1934. The second time came about eighteen months later, when Hitler voiced his intention to remilitarize the Rhineland.

Ludwig Beck was a realist. He knew the world outside Germany. He saw what would be inevitable, once a war began.

Later it was said that "the generals" had objected to the remilitarization of the Rhineland. But it was not the generals; it was Chief of the General Staff Ludwig Beck. And, to some extent, Chief of the Army von Fritsch, who was strongly influenced by Beck.

Beck knew perfectly well that if the Allies undertook a punitive expedition—in fact, if the French only partially mobilized—the Rhineland could not be held. The German Army would have had to retreat, and not only would the Allies probably occupy the Rhineland once more, but the reconstruction of the German Army would be slowed up by years, perhaps for a decade.

Beck explained this to Hitler in long and rather hectic conferences in which General von Fritsch took part, though he did not say a word. Beck did one thing more; he wrote down a lengthy memorandum in which he set forth all the arguments that militated against the Rhineland occupation.

Hitler's bold stroke at this point was to declare he would take personal responsibility for the entire action. If the plan miscarried, he would resign immediately. This act would demonstrate to the whole world that he and he alone had been responsible, and that the German Army could not be charged with any guilt. Ludwig Beck demanded this assurance in black and white. Within a few hours he received a letter from Hitler in a sealed envelope.

If the French or the British had resisted at that time, had they even instituted sanctions against Germany, the German troops would have retired from the Rhineland. In fact, Beck gave sealed orders to the commanding generals to retire at once in case any resistance were offered. Then Beck would have demanded Hitler's resignation.

France was ready to act. England was not ready. England hesitated. It was largely due to the influence of Edward VIII, the present Duke of Windsor, that the League of Nations also did not impose sanctions upon Germany. Edward saw to it that the session on the question was held in London, not Geneva.

In fact, it was held in one of the rooms of St. James's Palace. The King was in the next room the whole time, and his presence influenced the British delegates sufficiently to prevent any measures against Germany.

At the time, Maxim Litvinov, French Prime Minister Flandin, and General Gamelin tried in vain to get some action against Germany. But nothing was done. Consciously or unconsciously, the King of England had saved Hitler's regime.

Shortly after the remilitarization of the Rhineland Ludwig Beck went to Paris. He had with him Hitler's declaration, and he took the precaution of putting it in a safe place in France. His friends in Paris found him extremely depressed. Even then he bitterly repented having helped Hitler take power. He admitted that the occupation of the Rhineland had been a lost battle in the Army's struggle against Hitler. He felt now that it was his task to save whatever could be saved. The worst of it was, he declared, that Hitler had cleverly contrived to lead most of his, Beck's, colleagues around by the nose. But Beck had not yet given up the battle.

He remained in the French capital only a few days. Then he returned to Berlin. His last words before departing were that he was preparing the next round against Hitler. This was apparently meant as a joke, but his friends afterward remarked that Beck had not smiled.

The next round was lost, too. It was the attempt of Fritsch and Beck, at the end of January, 1938, to get rid of Blomberg and to diminish the Nazi influence in the Army. But Beck didn't take lying down what had happened to General von Fritsch. It will be recalled that Herr von Fritsch had spent the first few days in February, 1938, confined to his rooms. They were the days when Hitler won over some of his generals and sent the others into temporary banishment. Originally Himmler had been ordered to arrest Fritsch, but Hitler had finally decided on the milder form of voluntary confinement out of consideration for the other officers. For even those generals who had not followed Fritsch had definite ideas about what treatment should

and should not be accorded a man who had just recently been Chief of the Army.

The reason for von Fritsch's "arrest" was not, as everyone abroad believed, his ultimatum to Hitler. The reason was rather Heinrich Himmler's "RW Dossier" on Fritsch's private life. Himmler's agents, it seems, had suddenly discovered that Herr von Fritsch had objectionable sexual habits. Himmler allegedly had obtained proof that Fritsch had forced younger officers and enlisted men to yield to his will. There was even talk of discharging Fritsch "without the right to wear the uniform."

Then, a few days later, Fritsch's confinement to his quarters was revoked. Most of the officers were satisfied. Hitler had asked them their opinion and almost all had declared they considered the accusations against Fritsch absurd. But Ludwig Beck was not satisfied; he was furiously angry. Beck wrote to Hitler that the least General von Fritsch could demand was a trial before a Court of Honor, to clear his name. At first Hitler did not react to this suggestion, for by this time he had probably convinced himself that the charges against Fritsch were invented. Later on Himmler himself admitted this; he had been victimized by his agent, he declared. And the agent was removed. But when we consider Himmler's hatred for Fritsch, it seems quite likely that the Gestapo Chief had ordered the preparation of the libelous documents.

In any case, on April 12 General von Fritsch was tried before a Court of Honor. The chairman of the Court of Honor was Field Marshal Hermann Goering; the other two judges were the generals von Brauchitsch and Keitel. Himmler appeared with a young man who had previously testified that Fritsch had seduced him. Thereupon, Goering did something no one had expected. He did not allow the young man to confront Fritsch. Instead, he had a number of officers, with Fritsch in their midst, confront the young man. Suddenly the young man found himself facing two dozen men, all tall and slender, all with mask-like faces, all wearing monocles. The young man was frightened and confused. Finally he pointed to one of the

officers. It was not Fritsch. And the officer proved to be a man who was stationed in Koenigsberg, not in Berlin, at the time in question.

It is an amusing incident. One may certainly assume that the Gestapo had at least shown the young man a photograph of Herr von Fritsch before he was taken to the hearing. But these officers were so alike—identical in their uniforms, their bearing, their expression, or lack of it, in the very shape of their faces—that a frame up simply on the basis of a photograph was impossible.

Perhaps Hermann Goering went to such unusual lengths in order to show Heinrich Himmler that he was still to be reckoned with. In any case, the generals now realized, perhaps for the first time, that Goering, at least, was not their enemy. In fact, they decided Goering's title of Field Marshal was not an empty one. He was not one of them, of course—you couldn't take on the mantle that easily—but at least he was trying to behave like one of them.

Fritsch was rehabilitated. Later, in August of the same year, he was even honored by Hitler. The Fuehrer "gave him the Twelfth Artillery Regiment, whose Colonel he became." This was not, as was wrongly thought abroad, a demotion. Fritsch did not lose his rank of general. The fact that he received his own honorary regiment and became its Colonel was an unusual honor, something that formerly had been accorded only to members of the dynasty. This was Beck's second and last victory over Hitler. Soon afterward he was to break with the Fuehrer completely and forever.

Beck worked hard all summer long. This did not mean that he sat from morning to midnight in his office in the Bendlerstrasse. During the period he made many trips to Potsdam and spent whole days in the archives of the Military History Department of the General Staff which was located there.

Formerly, under the Empire, the department had been located in the headquarters of the General Staff on the Koenigsplatz. But it had expanded; very logically, it needed its own

building. The Military History Department, in fact, needed a whole array of buildings. Strategy had become a science, a science based on history. For history showed that there is nothing new under the sun—not in the field of warfare, at any rate.

There were archives on military history of Brandenburg-Prussia. Historical summaries of all the wars the world had ever known. The General Staff proceedings of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, written by the great Moltke himself. The General Staff work of World War I, turned over to the General Staff by the *Reichsarchiv* and analyzed by countless anonymous members of the General Staff. Hundreds of "monographs on military history" published by the German General Staff.

Those who do not know the generals may find it hard to understand that in those critical days Ludwig Beck retired to historical studies. It may seem to them that for the strategic decisions of 1938 nothing could be of less importance than the military history of Hannibal, or Napoleon, or of Frederick the Great. But this is an error. To the generals, nothing was so crucial as the events of those long ago times and those ancient wars.

In any case, Ludwig Beck did not retire to historical studies for their own sake. His reading in the history of past wars was an attempt to gain insight into what the near future would bring.

To understand fully the German generals—or almost any generals, for that matter—and to know how they come to their decisions and why these decisions are so-and-so, it must be realized that they have one fundamental principle of strategy: for them, there is nothing new under the sun.

They mean this literally. In 1918, for example, when the generals realized that they were facing what they considered a severe peace treaty, they immediately recalled that once before in history Prussia had had to sign a humiliating peace: at Tilsit, following Napoleon's great victories at Jena and Auerstedt.

During the first few days of November, 1918, the General

Staff took out the archives on Tilsit and studied what had happened after the defeat. What had been done to avert the consequences of defeat and to prepare the war of revenge. Naturally, every General Staff officer knew pretty well what had happened after Tilsit. Nevertheless, they went to the archives and studied them again. It was no romantic gesture. A number of military publications that appeared after Hitler took power mentioned this procedure and showed how the lessons of Tilsit were systematically applied.

As a matter of fact, the French had remembered, too. By the clause in the Versailles Treaty forbidding the Germans to discharge more than five per cent of their standing army annually, the French tried to prevent those lessons from being applied. They recalled only too well the *Kruepfer System*; after 1806 the Germans had annually dismissed three-quarters of their small standing army, called up new recruits, and in a few years had a fighting force many times as large as the permitted standing army. In fact, in spite of the French precautions von Seeckt succeeded in doing just that by applying, with few variations, the successful method the Prussians had used after Tilsit.

The slavish dependence on history that has always been characteristic of Prussian officers is by no means as strange or as old-fashioned as it may seem. In fact, there is a clear and penetrating logic to it.

The problems of military strategy have remained the same through the ages. Armies have to defend borders, defeat the enemy. That was true three hundred years ago and it is true today. The tasks have remained the same since the times of Hannibal, Frederick the Great, and Napoleon. Technical weapons have been invented, but these do not change the fundamentals. For they have been added to both sides, and are thus, so to speak, cancelled out.

Or, to oversimplify a little, military science today still has to strive for the very same ends that Hannibal and Scipio achieved. Encirclement, outflanking, annihilation of the enemy. The cen-



tures have not altered the goals; the inventions of modern technical science have not changed them one whit.

It would be a crass misinterpretation to assume that the German officers who were so rooted in history and tradition were opposed to progress. They wanted, however, to use the new techniques—once they were convinced of their worth and importance—exclusively to carry out traditional tasks. And this they have succeeded in doing with remarkable brilliancy. Let us consider the example of old Hindenburg. In his youth he traveled about by stagecoach. From what is known of him, we may well assume that he would have preferred to do this for the rest of his life. But we know also that he was one general who all his life worked for the expansion of the railroads along strategic lines and who used the railroads to the fullest in wartime. For him and for all other German officers, the tasks remained the same, remained traditional. But they were all eager to apply technical innovations to the solution of those tasks.

There is a further step from the traditional tasks of warfare to the traditional existence of these officers. They wanted to apply technical progress in order to maintain traditions. In other words, to use progress to fight progress. Dive bombers in order to preserve conditions in *Ostelbien* as they had been for hundreds of years. Tanks to enable the landowners to continue to go hunting.

They were willing to employ progress—certainly. But they were never willing to compromise with it. A compromise with progress would mean the beginning of the end because it would mean the end of their tradition. This was their conflict, a tragic conflict if you will. And with or without Hitler this conflict made the decline of the German military caste an historical inevitability.

It is indicative that the German officers were almost alone in their study of history for the purpose of solving military problems. Alone, certainly, in their absolute devotion to such study. For in almost all other countries the tasks of the mili-

tary had changed, because the conflict between tradition and progress was already decided. Or because, especially in the New World, it had been decided beforehand.

## 2

The most important writings in the archives of the Military History Department are the writings of Karl von Clausewitz, Count Helmuth von Moltke, and Alfred von Schlieffen. These, at any rate, are the men who most influenced the present and the last generation of officers and thereby the strategy of this war as well as the last one.

Clausewitz was one of the founders of the Prussian General Staff and played an important part in the organization of the European war against Napoleon I, in 1813. He has much greater importance in the realm of military theory, however. He analyzed all the campaigns of Napoleon. He crystallized into formulas the great intuition of the French Emperor. He crystallized them into practical formulas which could be used by Army leaders of lesser vision than Napoleon: Clausewitz realized that what made Napoleon's success possible were the changes the Revolution had brought about. Without compulsory military service, without centralized government, Napoleon's strategy could not have been developed.

What excited the Prussians in the theoretical works of Clausewitz was the Corsican's preference for the offensive. To march and to strike—to march and to strike was Napoleon's slogan. That is exactly what the Prussians wanted to do. They were impressed with the nonchalance with which Napoleon used up the riches and the man power of whole countries. To make armies, to sacrifice them, to make new ones—as Napoleon had done—that was war. In one single and enormous offensive movement to beat the enemy army, to occupy the enemy's capital, to frighten the population and to force peace—that is what the German generals learned from Napoleon. They learned from him that it didn't matter much who had more soldiers, but

only who had more soldiers on the battlefield. Therefore, it was necessary to launch an offensive. Whoever launched the offensive had the initiative; whoever had the initiative could choose the place of battle.

From Napoleon, Clausewitz came to broader and more general concepts; he found out that certain forms of strategy could only have been born in certain times; he finally saw in the development of the art of war only an expression of the development of the human race.

Count von Moltke was probably Germany's most successful general. He won the war against Denmark, the war against Austria, the war against France. His work is mainly descriptive of his campaigns—description so minute and so clear that it is unique in military literature.

In contradistinction to Count Moltke, his successor, Count von Schlieffen never conducted a single war. Nevertheless, of all the German General Staff leaders it was he who had the greatest influence upon his followers and upon the entire German officers corps. For he was the clearest analyst who ever wrote on military matters. Of all the military writers of all time it was he who knew best how to reduce all the thousands of phenomena of warfare to a few fundamental formulas. According to Schlieffen there existed only a few variations of these fundamentals, and all wars could be fitted into the fundamental forms and their variations. He considered it his mission to make this absolutely clear to his successors. And it was the mission of his successors to understand it. The members of the German General Staff studied Schlieffen the way divinity students peruse the Bible. They knew him by heart, and today they still know him by heart.

In his capacity as interpreter and commentator, Schlieffen was particularly interested in the Battle of Cannae (260 B.C.), that famous battle in Lower Italy in which Hannibal utterly destroyed the numerically superior Roman forces under Varro and Paulus. That battle was the source of the "Cannae Theory."

According to that theory, Cannae presented the ideal prototype of a victory: the successful double encirclement.

On a front more than a mile wide, Terentius Varro had placed his sixty-four thousand men. The cavalry was at the wings, the infantry at the center. The infantry consisted of fifty-five thousand heavily armed and therefore slowly moving legionnaires. They were placed at an average depth of thirty-four men. With this phalanx Varro hoped to mow down the enemy.

Hannibal had only fifty thousand men but they were much better trained. He arranged them in a more complicated way. He, too, had infantry in the middle and cavalry at the wings. That was tradition. But he had put only twenty-two thousand infantrymen on the battlefield; that is, he had only a depth of about fourteen men. And furthermore, those twenty-two thousand were not his best soldiers. His best infantry, heavily armed Africans, stood in reserve.

While the Roman legions pressed hard against Hannibal's infantry and slowly, step by step, won territory, but without creating panic, the Carthaginian cavalry beat the Romans on both wings. They thus got around to the back of the Roman phalanx. Now Hannibal threw in his reserves. He sent them, too, to the back of the Romans. Now the Romans were surrounded. The ring was thin but it was hard. The Romans no longer had space to move. The last rows of the phalanx, of course, turned around to face the enemy in the rear, which created confusion among them. They were massacred. Only fourteen thousand under Consul Paulus got away.

Hannibal's maneuver had been enormously daring. And this was what fascinated Schlieffen and the other German military writers and generals. Cannae proved that with daring, with superior leadership and better trained troops, one could succeed in a desperate situation. Better training could make up for inferiority in numbers. And, needless to say, inferiority in numbers had always been a handicap of the Prussians and would always be in future wars.

According to Schlieffen, all the great victories of history were

won by following the Cannae principle, although until his death Schlieffen knew of only one other case where the principle had succeeded a hundred per cent.

That was in 1870 when the Prussian Army encircled and defeated the French Army at Sedan. After Schlieffen's death, in 1914, came the third and last case of a Cannae victory: the victory of the Germans over the Russians at Tannenberg, the victory that made Hindenburg famous. Cannae, to Schlieffen, meant strong wings. Strong wings became an obsession with him. Schlieffen's last words—in reference to his famous plan for the invasion of France—are supposed to have been: "Make the left wing strong." Strong wings became a fixed idea even more with Schlieffen's pupils and successors.

The other great figure in Schlieffen's writings, besides Hannibal, is Frederick the Great. Frederick the Great was linked by a thousand ties to the Prussian and German Armies. He founded the tradition; it was he who overnight made the Prussian Army famous; were it not for him, Prussia—and therefore Germany—would never have become a Great Power. He was, naturally enough, the idol of the Prussian officer clique. Incidentally, although Frederick the Great did a lot for his officers (he also demanded a great deal of them), he did not think much of them. Once he said that he always listened to his officers in the War Council and then did exactly the opposite of what they suggested because that was the surest way to win. Another time, when an old officer referred to his long experience, Frederick burst out:

"If experience meant anything, then the mule on which Prince Eugene of Savoy used to ride into battle would be a great general."

In a way, Schlieffen rediscovered Frederick the Great. He didn't do it for reasons of tradition or in order to glorify a Hohenzollern. He did it for the sake of practical necessities. The nineteenth century was the era of technical progress, economic development, of mass armies. The generals could waste men and material. And they did waste men and material, as they

learned from Napoleon. In a time like that, the way Frederick the Great led his wars seemed petty, stingy, even ridiculous. How niggling to make war for years with extremely small armies. A lot of maneuvering solely in order to avoid a battle. One, two battles a year. Civil populations of enemy countries were treated with more regard than their own population was treated by the end of the nineteenth century during maneuvers. The nineteenth century did not understand the eighteenth century any more, so far as the technique of war-making was concerned.

Schlieffen, of course, had no intention of turning the clock back. However, he understood that the political situation of Germany around the turn of the century became more and more similar to the situation of Frederick the Great and his Prussia. As Frederick the Great had been threatened, so the new Germany was "threatened" with a two-front war.

Schlieffen was always a pessimist. He always had the vision of a gigantic coalition against Germany such as was actually formed in 1914. The many maneuvers he conducted were not only complicated by his last-minute "hazards"—such as blizzards or the collapse of a bridge—but also by newly "invented" enemies. In his last maneuvers, he conceived of everybody as against Germany. There were no neutrals any more. With all the respect for him, his officers considered him a little deranged in this regard. World War I should have proved to them that he had been quite sane.

Schlieffen saw that Germany was in exactly the same situation as Frederick the Great and that, again, Germany was poorer than the other countries.

Again, Germany had no raw materials, no inexhaustible reserves of men. Therefore, it was only logical that, before trying to answer the question of how the next war could be won, he went back to Frederick the Great.

And Schlieffen found in his study of Frederick's campaign the same answer that Cannae had given him: daring, superior

leadership, and superior training of the troops could win over numerical superiority.

The best example of this was the Battle of Mollwitz in 1741. The Prussians were fighting the Austrians. The battle seemed to be going badly for the Prussians; the superior Austrian cavalry had driven off the Prussian cavalry. But the infantry, which had been drilled for years by Frederick's father and by Frederick himself, stood on the battlefield as they had learned to stand on the drill grounds of Potsdam. Not a man retreated. Each man went through the motions he had practiced for many years. Each man fired five shots a minute. The Austrians could fire only two shots a minute. The three shots' difference decided the battle. The Austrians lost too many men; they wavered, retreated, and when the whole Prussian Army began moving toward them as though on parade, with the bands playing and bayonets fixed, the Austrian Army was done for. Frederick the Great's "secret weapon," those extra three shots a minute, had won.

If it had not been for the similarity of the situation between Frederick the Great and Germany at the turn of the century, Schlieffen would not have concentrated so much on the great king. But it was not only the similarity of the situations, it was also the influence of Napoleon I on the German officers which made him do so. Napoleon I did not consider a lost battle or a lost army any great catastrophe. He built a new army, sought and found new battles. This was, the German officers felt, exactly what they wanted to do. And this is where Schlieffen had to act as a brake. And this is where he again had to go back to Frederick the Great. Because, like the old king, the new Germany was not in a position to risk and possibly lose armies since it could not create new ones in a hurry. This, then, and the fact that Germany was "surrounded" and would have to fight on more than one front (like Frederick) were the reasons behind the so-called Schlieffen plan and the altered Schlieffen plan which were applied in World War I and II.

If you were encircled or, to use a more pleasant phrase, were

fighting on "interior lines," your only chance was to beat the enemies before they united, or—what amounted to the same thing—before they could begin a concentrated offensive on all fronts at once. Hence, at least one of the enemies had to be defeated as soon as possible. When you operated on interior lines, you had to hurry.

Therefore initiative, offensive, and quick, decisive victories. Or, as Schlieffen put it, "a strategic Cannae." It may be called blitzkrieg, though the term, of course, came much later. The idea was old. It was the idea of Hannibal, of Frederick the Great, of Napoleon. All the major plans and subordinate plans that the General Staff worked out before 1914 and between 1920 and 1939 were in one way or another based on the experiences and the achievements of these three great soldiers.

The Greater General Staff methodically discussed and studied military history; the generals attempted to put themselves in the position of each military leader of the past and to determine why he should have reacted in a certain way and why he had not reacted in that way. The plans of the Greater General Staff were worked out in seminars on military history.

None knew better than the members of the General Staff that in both the first and second World Wars the rapid victory over at least one enemy was no final victory at all. It was merely the precondition for the continuation of a war. The word blitzkrieg, which incidentally was never invented by the generals but by the Nazi propagandists, was an attempt to deceive the world about this. Unfortunately, it had considerable success. The German people in particular were to be persuaded that the war would go swiftly and painlessly. This conviction was all the more necessary because the Germans—and the Italians, too, of course—were thoroughly convinced that they could not survive a long war.

The concept of the blitzkrieg, then, is far older than "modern weapons" and has nothing at all to do with Stukas and tanks. Connecting the idea with modern weapons was also the job of the Nazi propagandists.



Blitzkrieg, as practiced by the German militarists, has given rise to a curious idea in the minds of those who know nothing about strategic necessities and the historical basis of German strategy. Since the outbreak of World War II this idea has been widely discussed. It is similar to the view that the bombing of defenseless cities or the employment of poison gas is humane, because such radical methods shorten the war. Both inside and outside Germany some people have wondered whether the German generals did not apply the blitzkrieg technique because they did not want to make war at all. But since they had to make war, it is urged, a short war seemed to them more reasonable and more humane than a long war. In other words, the blitzkrieg arose out of a dislike for war.

It has already been shown that the German generals had no other choice; blitzkrieg was a necessity. But the question of whether the generals wanted war at all, and especially whether the German generals wanted this war, must still be discussed.

### 3

The evidence does not all point to the conclusion that the German generals wanted war. They wanted a large army. They wanted to rearm. But perhaps their only idea was to frighten other nations and win peacefully what they might possibly have won through a successful war. A man like Schlieffen, for example, spent his entire life in preparing for war and seemed little disturbed by the fact that he himself was not allowed to wage a war. There is a powerful school of thought which believes that an army and a navy must be strong, not to wage wars, but to make wars impossible. It cannot be accepted *a priori* that the German generals did not belong to this school of thought.

Moreover, after World War I certain special conditions existed which, to a German officer, made rearmament a necessity even though he may not have thought of war.

The borders fixed by the Treaty of Versailles—this is not

intended as a discussion of the justice of the Treaty of Versailles—were militarily indefensible. The German generals knew this; in fact, every general and everyone who knew something about strategy knew it. To a general that meant that these borders must be changed. This did not necessarily mean war; but a correction of frontiers could be obtained without war only if one were strong enough. Only statesmen like Gustav Stresemann and Walther Rathenau believed it could be obtained without extorting it by the threat of military power; the generals could never believe this.

Then there was the psychological factor. The Germans had been beaten. Aside from all questions of patriotism, the German officers and the German generals found themselves in the psychological position of a defeated athlete. They wanted another chance—wanted it from the purely sporting point of view. This was perhaps the attitude of von Hindenburg when he sent von Ribbentrop to the British and French General Staffs and expected them to support his efforts at rearmament.

Finally there was the economic factor. If there were any army at all, there could be a continuation of the military tradition; there could be generals, lieutenants, captains, majors. The greater the army, the better the members of the caste could be taken care of. For although some individuals were enormously rich, most members of the military clique were none too well off. Partly through their own incompetence they had piled huge debts on their estates.

Logically enough, the military caste had never mentioned these questions. For these had nothing to do with patriotism. This was a bread-and-butter matter—or perhaps one should say, a matter of good living. If the pacifist statesmen of Germany had won out, the Army would have shrunk still more. And the members of the officer caste would have starved. From the economic point of view, then, they had no choice. They had to support parties that were opposed to pacifism and opposed to the reduction of the Army. And even if the generals had wanted no war, the political parties that supported the main-

nance and extension of the Army, and with whom they had lied themselves, *were* for war. And so, whether or not the generals were originally for war, in the end they had no choice; they had to be for it.

This is the theoretical side of the question. We have seen that they were for war because they had to be. But aside from all these logical proofs, there can be no doubt that the German military caste was for war, had always had been for war. Their militarism was not like the militarism of other nations. They were not merely ready to fight in order to defend their country; not merely willing to fight only when it became necessary. German, or rather Prussian, militarism, was and is the affirmation of fighting in and for itself. It is the belief that fighting is, in principle, better than peace.

Old Moltke once received a handbook published by the Institute for International Law, which had come out for the abolition of war. He wrote to the editor: "Eternal peace is a dream, and not even a pleasant dream. War is part of God's universal order. In war the noblest virtues of men unfold: courage and self-denial, loyalty and willingness to sacrifice even life. Without war the world would sink into a morass of materialism."

This was pretty much the attitude of the entire Prussian military caste. Moltke, as a matter of fact, was one of the most liberal of the whole group. He at least admitted that eternal peace had some justification as an illusion, although a illusion which he did not consider pleasant. The average member of the military caste was against even the illusion of eternal peace. To most of them peace was something boring and untestable. Supporters of peace—the pacifists—were not merely people with other views; they were traitors to the Fatherland and must be destroyed. These officers did not hesitate to have the pacifist traitors destroyed through their "*Feme* murders."

It was shameful not to be for war, honorable to be for war. The military caste sprang from old families; the officers had had a good upbringing. There were certain things that were

not said. People simply did not engage in orgiastic descriptions of the horrors of warfare. That sort of thing they left to the Nazi propagandists who in recent years have reached the peak of the possible in that regard. They had to, in order to convince the German people that shooting refugees on the roads, bombing civilian populations, and murdering hostages were heroic deeds. But even an old conservative like General von Rundstedt wrote in the *Voelkischer Beobachter* on May 10, 1940: "Certainly we think earnestly of the dead, but we do not mourn."

This sort of militarism, which considers battle the goal of life, naturally led the generals to consider war the goal of their careers. The goals of the wars themselves came second. In actual fact, up to 1916 no one in Germany had any idea of the war aims of World War I. When the people slowly began to ask questions, the industrialists quickly concocted a number of war aims. At that time the generals were also asked to contribute a few. They shrugged. War aims? They had not thought of it.

The indefensible borders set by the Versailles Treaty have been mentioned here. What borders did the generals want? At various times there have been different views on this question. There was only one view common to all of them: whatever the borders were to be, they were always to be situated in some foreign country. The generals asserted that Poland was needed. Why? Poland could not be allowed to decide whether or not German troops could march through her territory, if such an action should prove necessary. Alsace-Lorraine was needed, and a good section of France besides. Why? "It is the bridge-head of Germany." What it amounted to was that they wanted war in order to get more than they had—or as the generals put it, to assure the safety of what they had. And undoubtedly the generals realized that the safety of the newly conquered territory must also be assured, and that this could be done only by conquering still more territory, more "bridge-heads." The whole thing was an endless spiral, and that was precisely what the generals had in mind.

The huge deception in such a view was never more clearly revealed than in the years between 1918 and 1930. These were the years in which Germany was totally incapable of defending herself against France. France, with the strongest army in the world, could have fallen upon Germany whenever she pleased and bitten off huge chunks of German territory. Yet nothing of the kind happened. Even during those years when France was militarily supreme, she proved willing to negotiate, willing to make concessions on important parts of the Versailles Treaty. Those years proved conclusively that Germany was not in danger when she had a small army. She was not in danger precisely because she did not have a large army.

Self-defense cannot, therefore, be offered as an excuse for the militarism of the Prussian officer caste. There remains only the desire for war in itself, because war is something worth while. And because the salary of a general in wartime is twice as large as in peacetime. And because in wartime, German generals live in requisitioned castles and lead a life that Hindenburg once admitted was like a "health cure."

Fundamentally, then, the question is not at all complex. The answer is exactly what the layman conceives it to be. Men who have been trained for war for generations, men who have been trained for war since childhood, men who are important in wartime and unimportant in peacetime, men who for centuries have thought only of themselves and by their own admission are not interested in the lives of a few thousand or a few million other men who do not belong to their caste—why should such men not want war? Why should they want anything but eternal warfare?

#### 4

There are, to be sure, some differences. Slight differences. Differences in understanding. There were clever generals and stupid generals. There were those who wanted war at any price and those who wanted war only under specific conditions. There were those who thought only of limited goals that could be

achieved during their lifetimes (the "bridge-heads"). And there were those who dreamed of world domination.

In all justice, it must be said that the idea of world domination as such did not originate with the Prussian military caste. The East Elbian Junkers in the beginning were not national chauvinists. They wanted power for themselves in Germany; that was all. Until World War I they were, in fact, to a certain extent internationally minded. They spoke French, they loved Paris, they gambled at Monte Carlo.

The idea of world domination was on the one hand far too political for them, on the other far too utopian. It was an idea that could not emerge from the military caste. It emerged instead from the intellectual *petite bourgeoisie*, from the wild-eyed university professors and teachers who became intoxicated with the idea of "*Deutschland ueber Alles*," and who saw no reason why such an idea could not be realized in practice. It emerged also from industrial circles—logically enough, because world domination meant bigger and better business. The Pan-German League, then, with its plans for world conquest which dated from the turn of the century, was not founded by the German military group. Naturally, many members of that caste were sympathetic to some extent. If only a small part of the aspirations of the Pan-German League were to be realized—indeed, if no more than the preparations were actually carried out—the effects upon the officers' profession could not help being favorable. The Pan-German League reproached the Kaiser for not being aggressive enough. To the officers this meant that the Kaiser was being attacked because he had not armed sufficiently. Even if no war developed, increasing armies were fine for the officers.

The Pan-German League proceeded on the assumption that Germany as such had no future. The reason was her unfavorable geographic position. Therefore, either new countries must be acquired or Germany would collapse. The Pan-Germans knew very well that any serious attempt at expansion on the part of Germany would bring down opposition from other powers,

especially from England. Therefore the other powers, England and her eventual allies particularly (at that time Japan was considered the most dangerous prospective ally of England) must be defeated. In short: if Germany did not want to decline, she must unleash a world war and she must win such a world war.

So much for the Pan-Germans.

Not only did this idea not stem from the Prussian military caste, but very few of the members of the caste consciously went the whole way with the Pan-Germans. Very few, therefore, were in favor of unleashing one or a series of world wars. On the contrary. The Pan-Germans within the military caste were a very small group. Their chief representative, whose influence within the military was often challenged, was General Friedrich Wilhelm von Bernhardi.

Bernhardi was unquestionably one of the most talented and consistent German military writers both before and after World War I. As a Pan-German he declared that Germany could never become a world power until "we have consolidated our position in Europe, and that can only be done with blood and iron." As a strategist he had conceived many broad and extremely well-thought-out war plans. He even went further than Schlieffen; he hoped to defeat France within a few weeks, thus avoiding a two-front war. Bernhardi knew a good deal more about scientific matters than Schlieffen. He, too, wanted to end the war quickly, primarily because he felt that Germany had not the economic strength for a long war. In his studies he speaks frequently of capital, raw materials, and economic reserves—things that Schlieffen, a purely military expert, knew little about. Unlike Schlieffen, Bernhardi therefore did not want the German right wing to swing south and occupy Paris. He wanted to occupy the French coast, partly to threaten England, partly to keep open the way to the rest of the world.

What is important about Bernhardi in this connection is that all his life he fought for world war. In 1911 he published a book entitled *Germany and the Next War*. In 1917, when

he realized that the war was lost, he began working on a new book, *The War of the Future*. In the post-war years—by that time he was a very old man—he wrote constantly in support of Pan-German ideas. In addition, through Seeckt, he played an advisory part in the reconstruction of the Army. He was very pleased with the election of Hindenburg as President, seeing in it the first great chance for the Army. He was an early follower of Hitler, and until his death kept up a lively correspondence with the Fuehrer. It is worth noting that Bernhardt went to Hitler, not vice versa. He prized the young Nazi in his capacity as a Pan-German, not in his capacity as a former active general. For he thought that Hitler would provide a broad popular basis for the Pan-German movement.

The other great representative of Pan-Germanism in the military caste was Professor Karl Haushofer, the geopolitical writer. A Bavarian general, he did not actually belong to the Prussian officer clique. And his Pan-Germanism, which was expressed most fully after the World War in the new science of geopolitics that he developed, separated him even more sharply from the military caste. Haushofer left the Army after the war and finally became professor at the University of Munich. His great influence upon Hitler cannot, therefore, be considered the influence of the German military. It is, as a matter of fact, a more or less personal influence. Long before Hitler joined forces with the Reichswehr, Haushofer's influence was strong. For Haushofer had been the teacher of Hitler's secretary and friend, Rudolf Hess.

Haushofer was one of the generals who went somewhat mad after the last war. Like Ludendorff, he could not understand why Germany had lost. Ludendorff finally decided to attribute the failure to secret forces. Haushofer sought a way out in science. That is to say, he developed an entire new science—a tremendous structure of analysis—in order to find out how Germany could win world domination in spite of the lost war.

It all started with the idea of living space. The very expression was invented by Haushofer. By living space, however, he



did not mean a place where people could live. He defined it rather, as L. Farago in *German Psychological Warfare* states, as an area "which can be made self-sufficient in culture, raw material, and industrial goods. The proposed living space was claimed on the basis of German cultural nuclei existing in continental and overseas areas. Haushofer distinguished between active and passive areas, the former being battlefields, the latter centers of agricultural and industrial supplies. Geopoliticians were given the preliminary task of establishing the living space area, while the military had the task of acquiring and maintaining it...for frontiers were not determined by geography but by the forces which imposed their demands for living space and their culture on certain areas. Frontiers are living organisms which grow and die in the fluidity of historical processes, often accelerated by great leaders...."

And *cui bono*? To whose advantage would all this living space work—if it worked? In Haushofer's mind, at least, "Germany must be the country to profit by it." Or, to oversimplify for a moment, the whole of Haushofer's geopolitics was nothing but an answer to the question: How can we win the next war?

Haushofer began to see the entire world as a single terrain for maneuvers. He had a different conception of the surface of the earth from the average geographer; to him there was only "terrain." Planes offered opportunities for mechanized armies to move swiftly; hills were positions for snipers; rivers meant tasks for the engineers; high mountains covered the flanks of an army. Sheep's wool was potential uniforms; the resources of the earth were munitions. The seas were lines of communication. The islands in the seas—naval bases. Human beings were simply potential soldiers or munitions workers.

Haushofer dreamed of a single tremendous continent extending from Europe to Afghanistan. Africa, connected to Europe by two great dams at Gibraltar and Messina, was included in the scheme.

Once this enormous land mass was combined, it must necessarily rule the world. Haushofer called this land mass (after

the English scientist, Mackinder) the World Island. Since the World Island was to rule the world, it followed that the ruler of the World Island would dominate the earth. Moreover, Haushofer reasoned, this World Island could not be ruled from outside; it must be ruled by the country at its core. Haushofer disagreed with the English scientist on just which country this was. Haushofer, of course, conceived of Germany as ruling the world.

But that was to come later, much later. Till then, wars were necessary, or as Haushofer put it, territories had to be acquired and held. And in this connection he was particularly afraid of Russia. While his entire geopolitics was really no more than an attempt to escape from a kind of national claustrophobia, the wide spaces of Russia infected him with agoraphobia. The breadth of Russia—and this he admitted in dozens of articles—was an important weapon. Here Haushofer's military knowledge played a part; as an old general he knew very well that no army, no matter how great, could ever conquer Russia. The country offered unlimited possibilities for retreat.

Therefore, Haushofer was always urging Hitler to conclude a pact with Russia. In this regard he eventually joined forces with his former comrades, the generals, who were certainly not thinking of the World Island when they demanded the pact with Russia. The day the Soviet-German Pact was signed was a great day for old Haushofer, and the day Hitler marched into Russia was his blackest day. For Haushofer wanted a pact with Russia not only because he was afraid of the great Russian spaces but because he foresaw, as Bernhardt did, that any war Germany began would have to become a world war.

During the twenties and thirties most of the generals did not understand what Bernhardt and Haushofer had already realized. The others had no political ideas to help them realize that Germany could not move without shattering the equilibrium of the world—that is, without unleashing a world war. They did not understand that the concept of peace had changed since the days of Frederick the Great's wars, and even since the days of

the Franco-Prussian war. Peace in the world could no longer be segregated at will.

The German generals could not understand this, and the reason goes back to their roots in *Ostelbien*. From their point of view, seen from that part of the country in which they had originated, Germany was no more than the Mark Brandenburg grown bigger with the years. Out of Brandenburg had come Prussia. And out of Prussia, finally, Germany. What was there to stop this process; why should there suddenly be a limit to it? They could not distinguish between political developments that were unimportant to the world and those that were important to the world. They could not understand that the inclusion of many small provinces and territories to make the whole that was Germany was something that the surrounding Great Powers could not tolerate. Bismarck showed the Russians that Germany was a good counterpoise to Austria; he showed the English that Germany would make a good counterpoise to France. But now a limit had been reached; the Great Powers could not tolerate any change in it, that is, any expansion of Germany.

## 5

In 1930 the German Reichswehr had at its disposal two Army groups. One was stationed in Berlin, the other in Kassel.

In 1935 there were three Army groups. The third had its headquarters in Dresden.

By the end of 1937 there were four—the fourth was in Leipzig.

The significance of this is apparent at first glance. Before Hitler came to power, the Reichswehr had no thought of an offensive war in the near future. Berlin and Kassel as headquarters of the Army groups meant a defensive deployment against France.

The addition of Dresden and Leipzig signified the preparation of the Eastern Front. Troops in Dresden, in particular, meant that the blow was to be aimed at Czechoslovakia.

Since the Treaty of Versailles the generals had stared as if in a trance at the Eastern border. The Polish Corridor and especially the senseless tearing up of Silesia were matters they could not forget. Even von Fritsch was definite about it; the matter of the Eastern border must be straightened out. Von Brauchitsch, his successor, did not doubt for a moment that this would soon be done. To be sure, one of Hitler's first steps in foreign politics was to conclude a nonaggression pact with Poland. But no one, least of all the generals, doubted that this pact would be broken at the first opportunity. In fact, Brauchitsch declared on April 28, 1939, after Germany had denounced the treaty with Poland: "The foreign policy of the Third Reich has once more taken its classic, Prussian direction."

This is a precise statement of the fact, and Brauchitsch spoke for all the generals. To Brauchitsch this declaration meant that hostilities with Poland would soon begin, and he clearly stated as much in a speech before cadets at the Tannenberg memorial on July 19, 1939: "East Prussia is German soil. Let this be an admonition to you, cadets...and at the same time an answer to those who think to maintain their alleged rights in this ancient German land, a land that for thousands of years has had a German tradition, a land that is German by nature and through the course of history. These people are committing an error that soldiers do not customarily correct with words. We are not looking for war, but we do not fear it." And in conclusion he recalled a phrase of Frederick the Great: "We must attack if we do not wish to be covered by the enemy artillery."

The war against Poland had therefore already been decided. The generals believed it would be possible to isolate this war. Even Brauchitsch was convinced that with his new and unproved army he could not conduct a great war. Moreover, he had great respect for both the French and the Russian Armies, and he considered the Maginot Line impregnable.

Brauchitsch and his friends wanted Hitler to make possible an Eastern war as an isolated, separate action. They believed he could do this, especially since his success in the occupation

of the Rhineland. Of all the generals, only Beck realized that a world war was the inescapable consequence of a war against Poland. And General von Fritsch was at last beginning to suspect it.

The war against Poland presupposed a war against Czechoslovakia. There was nothing improvised about it; it had been planned years before. The invasion of Austria had been accomplished in order to facilitate the attack on Czechoslovakia.

Perhaps one should not speak of a war with Czechoslovakia and a war with Poland. For this was precisely what the generals did not want—and what they reckoned was not necessary. They were not thinking in terms of wars, but of campaigns; short, lightning-like actions which would bring victory within a few weeks. The generals did not believe the German Army could accomplish more at that time.

The campaign against Czechoslovakia was to come first. It was set for the latter part of May, 1938. The entire deployment was based on Dresden; the Reichswehr and the Nazis had determined this as early as 1934, and that was why Dresden became the headquarters for Army Group III.

On May 20, 1938, Group Command II was mobilized and readied for the campaign.

But the Czechs obtained copies of the German mobilization plans through an officer on the German General Staff. The officer was later arrested in Dresden and handed over to a civilian court instead of a military court, in order to conceal the fact that he was an officer. His name was given as Max Zorn and he was executed as a civilian on the very day German troops marched into Sudetenland. The Czechs turned the plans over to the British and French ambassadors. France and England willy-nilly had to intervene, and Hitler and his generals had to call off their invasion. Later on the British politicians headed by that great statesman, Prime Minister Chamberlain, changed their minds. Lord Runciman was sent to Prague. Then came the Munich Conference and Hitler got what he wanted.

Nevertheless, neither he nor his generals were satisfied. They

had been cheated out of their campaign. They had reason to feel cheated. Besides destroying Czechoslovakia, that campaign had been intended to convince the world of the incredible strength of German arms, and to intimidate it. Munich had made such a maneuver impossible.

The world smiled wanly when, after Munich, the German generals treated the march into the Sudetenland like a campaign. But the Germans did not intend to play-act. They were trying to make at least some sort of military impression on the world.

The German generals then did something that is probably unique in military history of all time. After they had marched into the Sudetenland they published the deployment plan that had been prepared for the military conquest of Czechoslovakia. This unorthodox publication appeared in a technical military magazine with a limited audience. It was not indicated in so many words that the printed plans were the official plans. It was said, instead, that the printed plans represented the prize winner in a contest for military writers, a very obvious disguise, so obvious that one is forced to believe that it was just created to be seen through by the proper people. There never had been an announcement of any such contest in that particular magazine. There never was any second prize, or third, or any mention, indeed, of other contestants. To clinch it all, the man who won the "first prize" was the head of the operations department of the staff of Dresden—from which town the invasion of Czechoslovakia started. But those who were supposed to read what the Germans published did read it, and they understood it. The members of the General Staffs in Warsaw, Paris, and London learned, too, that the German generals had had the complete plans for the fortifications of the Little Maginot Line. They learned that the German generals had figured it would take them two weeks to complete the entire Czechoslovakian campaign.

Perhaps that frightened them a little.

But their governments continued to slumber. Europe and the rest of the world slept the sleep of the just. Churchill shouted

himself hoarse warning England against the tremendous extent of German rearmament. Those who should have listened to him slept. Indeed, they had slept for a long time. Churchill's first warning against the German Luftwaffe had occurred in March, 1935. In May of the same year he had spoken about German naval rearmament and in September about German rearmament in general. But the German government got much more excited about these speeches than did the British government.

Russian Foreign Minister, Maxim Litvinov, the only statesman who offered Czechoslovakia assistance even at the very end (and who got his thanks for this offer from the Democratic Chamberlain and Daladier by exclusion from Munich), pulled every string he could, did everything he could to warn the world. But in vain. German pacifists who had escaped from Hitler published in their tiny emigrant newspapers in Paris significant details about the state of German armament. But people shrugged. Great American journalists and political writers, Vincent Sheean and John Gunther with Dorothy Thompson in the van, tried to rouse the world out of its sleep. The people read them and called them warmongers.

It has been justly said that few statesmen the world has ever known played the game as openly as Hitler. Years before he came to power, he had written a book predicting all he intended to do if he had the power. And the German generals—at least after Beck was pushed into the background, and Brauchitsch and Keitel began the reign of mediocrities and mediocre minds in the Germany Army—the German generals were no less cynically frank than their leader.

But the world preferred to see nothing and to hear nothing.

## ROADS TO MOSCOW

### I

ON OCTOBER 16, more than two weeks after the march into the Sudetenland, Ludwig Beck gave a small party in one of the private dining rooms of the Horcher Restaurant in Berlin. Present were Herr von Brauchitsch, Herr von Reichenau, and Herr Keitel.

The meal was splendid, as it always was at Horcher's. The mood of the generals was not as good. Ludwig Beck seemed distracted and depressed. And von Brauchitsch and Von Reichenau were painfully quiet. Such silence was astounding from Reichenau in particular who had led the march into the Sudetenland, who had been more or less the hero of the day.

General Wilhelm Keitel remarked upon this. Wilhelm Keitel was one of the few guests who was in good humor. He drank freely, and the more he drank the better his humor became. The thick-set man with his soft, good-natured, not over-intelligent face, finally felt called upon to make a little speech, after which he drank to the "great Czech victory" and toasted the new army.

The others looked at him in perplexity.

Each general had a different reason for feeling depressed. Von Brauchitsch was still irritated by Munich and the fact that the German Army had been cheated out of its grand parade. That meant they would have to strike against Poland sooner than they had expected. Brauchitsch's plans had envisioned a five-week spring campaign against Poland in 1941. A two-year pause to give the Army time to complete its arming would have been fine from the point of view of both internal and foreign politics, if the blitzkrieg against Czechoslovakia had actually taken



place. Since it had been called off, and since the march into the Sudetenland had not had any great effect either in Germany or abroad—Brauchitsch was thinking in terms of intimidation—they could not afford to wait too long. These thoughts Brauchitsch had voiced often to his friends in the past two weeks and was to voice even more often during the next few months.

General von Reichenau did not act at all like a victorious general though he looked exactly like the popular conception of a hero. At that time and later, too, he was undoubtedly one of the most popular men in the German Army. In spite of the fact that he was a scion of one of the oldest and noblest families in Germany, he was far less arrogant and inaccessible than most of his comrades. He, too, wore the inevitable monocle. But, like Brauchitsch, he was a charming conversationalist and distinctly good-looking. He was far more the cosmopolitan, or at least the big businessman, than the Prussian officer. Even the violent anti-Semitism in which he had indulged during his youth—as a student he even wrote a pamphlet against the Jews—had paled considerably with the years.

One of his most remarkable characteristics, because it was completely incomprehensible to his comrades, was his enthusiasm for sports. He swam, played tennis, drove a racing car. In his youth he had been an excellent athlete. In 1928 he decided to abandon his daily morning ride in the Berlin *Tiergarten* and instead spent the early mornings in long distance races with young officers. Von Fritsch and von Witzleben, who often saw him as they galloped past on their horses, shook their heads over such behavior and screwed their eyes tighter around their monocles. And when Herr von Reichenau actually began taking boxing instruction from a professional boxer, Walter Neusel, the generals were gravely disturbed. But von Reichenau didn't mind. Although he had to remove his monocle when boxing, he kept it on while running.

Among the generals, Reichenau had been one of the early followers of Hitler. He was one of those who backed Hitler to the hilt against Fritsch and Beck in the discussions of

January, 1938. It was he who, as Commanding General of Military District VII (Munich), played the chief part in the invasion of the Sudetenland. And, of course, we know that it was he who was slated to march to Prague and occupy the rest of Czechoslovakia within the next few months. General von Reichenau was perhaps not the most intelligent of the generals, though he was by no means as stupid as Wilhelm Keitel. But the few days he had spent in Czechoslovakia and the reports of his staff officers, and the military intelligence service since the occupation, had stunned him. We naturally do not know how von Reichenau and the other generals expected the Czech people to react to German occupation. But the probability is that they had not done much thinking about it at all. In any case, Reichenau was very disturbed by the Czech reaction. He said so this evening, and he said so even more frequently after Prague was taken.

Ludwig Beck knew more than the others about the projected invasion into the rest of Czechoslovakia. After all, the General Staff had drawn up the plans. Nevertheless, he was against it—had always been against it. Early in August, about six weeks or so before the Munich conference, he had requested Hitler to limit his demands on Czechoslovakia. He explained that it was enough to render the little country militarily harmless. Without the Little Maginot Line, Prague would no longer be a serious threat, not even in case of an attack on Poland. And, on the other hand, Beck was afraid that action against Prague itself would bring in the Western Powers. Over and over he explained to Hitler that Germany could carry out a campaign but not a long, full-scale war.

Hitler promised Beck that he would be content with the Sudetenland. Then suddenly Beck was sent away from Berlin. General von Brauchitsch asked him to go on an inspection tour in East Prussia. This was an unusual request from the Chief of the Army to the Chief of Staff. Doubly unusual at a time when so many things could happen overnight and when the Chief of Staff certainly should have stayed in Berlin.

When Beck tried to get out of this senseless and unnecessary trip, he learned that it was a command.

He understood. Evidently they did not want him around when the decision was handed down. Evidently the Fuehrer felt that his influence on the other generals might not be a favorable one from his point of view.

Beck came back from East Prussia just in time to hear Hitler make a speech in the Berlin *Sportspalast* on September 26.

"And now before us stands the last problem that must be solved and will be solved. It is the last territorial claim which I have to make in Europe, but it is the claim from which I will not recede and which, God willing, I will make good."

After Munich Beck breathed easier. World war seemed to have been avoided. But only a few days later Hitler called Beck to Berchtesgaden. On October 3 or 4 they had a conference during the course of which Hitler declared he had decided to take Prague.

Beck immediately took a plane back to Berlin and with the help of his staff began work on a memorandum that was to show Hitler how hopeless were Germany's chances in a world war. The memorandum was eighty typewritten pages long. It was completed on the night of October 15. On October 16 at 5 P.M. Beck handed the memorandum to the Fuehrer. A few hours later he met the other generals for dinner at Horcher's.

Ludwig Beck had not even included all his fears in this memorandum. When, a few days before Munich, Maxim Litvinov had declared that under certain conditions (*i.e.*, if France stuck to her pact with Czechoslovakia) Russia would come to Czechoslovakia's aid, Beck had been sick with worry. Intervention by Russia was exactly the thing that had to be avoided at any price.

During the dinner at Horcher's Beck voiced his concern lest Russia strike anyway when the invasion of Prague came, possibly without waiting for France and England. He declared the risk seemed to him too great and he was against taking the chance.

General von Reichenau said nothing. General von Brauchitsch remarked that if Prague were not occupied, nothing could be undertaken against Poland—the right flank would be uncovered. General von Reichenau spoke up at last. The war against Poland couldn't be given up, he said. Ludwig Beck contradicted him. They could very well attack Poland without occupying Prague, he said. A few divisions in the Sudetenland would suffice to hold the remainder of Czechoslovakia in check.

At this point Keitel stated his opinion. He declared he saw no reason at all for worry. Sooner or later, he continued, they would have to fight Russia. And the German Army would defeat the Russians—he was convinced of it.

Von Reichenau and Herr von Brauchitsch stared incredulously at the Chief of the High Command. Ludwig Beck was dismayed and said so. Did Keitel seriously believe they could afford a war with Russia? Had he discussed the matter with the Fuehrer? Did the Fuehrer share his views?

Keitel declared importantly that he was not in a position to say what the Fuehrer's ideas were. Ludwig Beck was on the point of provoking a scene, but succeeded in controlling himself. However, the dinner ended on an unpleasant note.

Perhaps Wilhelm Keitel, by that time, was somewhat in his cups or perhaps he was just drunk with the great victory the German Army had achieved in Sudetenland.

## 2

A war against Russia was the nightmare of all German generals. That nightmare was to some extent a tradition. A tradition that dated from Napoleon's defeat in Russia, where for the first time in modern warfare it was proved that beating Russian armies did not necessarily mean defeating Russia. It also dated from Bismarck's day. Bismarck, Germany's only statesman of genius, was considered one of their own, despite his occasional differences with them. And Bismarck had stressed at every opportunity that Germany must have peace with Rus-

sia, an alliance with Russia, some kind of collaboration with Russia—but in God's name no war with Russia. Moltke and Schlieffen had both shuddered at the thought of war with Russia, if only because it meant a two-front war. And before World War I, even the Pan-Germans were for at least a temporary alliance with that country. When World War I broke out, the Greater General Staff did everything it could to keep Russia out of it. With the exception of a single general (General Hoffmann) all of them agreed that war in the East must be avoided. Even so decided a hothead as Admiral Tirpitz used all his influence with the Kaiser to persuade him to come to an understanding with the Czar.

The experience of World War I had proved conclusively that a two-front war was an almost hopeless undertaking. After the war and the first few years of general confusion, no one in the General Staff (except a few outsiders like General von der Goltz) and none of the commanding officers even dreamed of anything but peace and co-operation with Russia. This may seem strange in view of the fact that the entire officer caste hated communism above all and mercilessly combated it in their own country. But the internal politics of Russia did not interest them. And communism was, after all, one more reason to keep on good terms with Russia. For in case of war, the generals correctly reasoned, the danger of political infection through desertions at the front and the danger of the German Communists' supporting Russia would be much greater than in peacetime.

Finally, a great part of the German General Staff had an extraordinarily high opinion of the striking power of the Red Army. In the middle of 1932—that is, before Hitler came to power—the General Staff made it a precondition to any war or any campaign Germany could undertake successfully that there should be friendship or at least strict neutrality on the part of Russia.

Ludwig Beck, at that time still the illegal chief of the illegal General Staff, stated this in a discussion with members of the

German Foreign Ministry. He also set forth the whole matter in a memorandum which outlined the minimum of favorable political combinations that the German General Staff needed in order to undertake a campaign in the next few years (to straighten out the Eastern border, and especially to eliminate the Polish Corridor). This minimum consisted of an agreement with Finland and an agreement with Rumania, as well as the dissolution of the Little Entente (Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia). An agreement with Finland meant blocking Russia from the north; the dissolution of the Little Entente and an agreement with Rumania meant blocking Russia on the south. Under such conditions, the General Staff felt, Russia would be forced to remain neutral in a conflict with Poland.

### 3

The Reichswehr had early made efforts to establish friendly relations with the Russians. This began during the Russo-Polish war in 1920-21. It had been started by the Poles, following immediately the so-called Intervention Wars. The Poles were aided to a certain degree by the French. Their leader, Marshal Pilsudski, penetrated into the Ukraine and took Kiev, but the Russians soon threw the Poles back again. The French sent General Weygand and the Poles finally won the battle of Warsaw. The peace came in March, 1921.

General von Seeckt did not want to remain neutral. Shortly after the outbreak of the war he got in touch with the Russians and promised them aid. Since the new German Army was only just beginning to rise out of the ruins of the old, that aid could not be of any real significance. And indeed nothing was actually done, since the Russian march to Warsaw soon came to a standstill when France intervened.

But the contact between Herr von Seeckt and the Russian Army had been established. The officers of the two armies found themselves in the same boat. After the Treaty of Versailles both armies and their officers were more or less outcasts. The

great problem of the Germans was how to evade the Versailles conditions and rebuild their army. The problem of the Russians was how to create an entirely new and dependable revolutionary army. To do this they needed technical military men, and many of the military experts in their own country were Czarist, and therefore unreliable.

And so they came to a secret agreement, concluded toward the end of 1921. In all probability this was later expanded and diplomatically sanctioned by a secret clause in the Rapallo Treaty of April 16, 1922.

The agreement dealt with the training of certain sections of the Reichswehr in Russia. In fact, even naval forces were included. The Russians had room; they could manufacture arms and build war machines unhampered by peace treaties. The Germans had experts from whom the Russians could learn. Both sides, therefore, profited by the collaboration.

Among other things, an aviation school for German officers was opened thirteen miles from Moscow. German officers also took courses in the handling of tanks, the use and servicing of heavy artillery. Maneuvers were held in which for the first time the integrated use of all the arms prohibited by the Treaty of Versailles could be tested.

The Junkers firm delivered planes—allegedly for Russian use; in reality for the Germans. Krupp delivered munitions—allegedly for the Russians; in reality for the Germans.

During the following years almost all the German officers, from Seeckt to Brauchitsch, from Fritsch to Bock, made trips to Russia—as civilians, of course. They all had “private business” in Russia, or else they were “vacationing.” Their vacations consisted of being present at maneuvers and at conferences with Russian generals.

All this was first revealed on December 16, 1926, when Philip Scheidemann, one of the most prominent members of the German Social Democratic Party took the floor in the German Reichstag to make sensational revelations. The revelations concerned a memorandum on the Junkers firm, the great-

est airplane manufacturers in Germany. Junkers, on orders from the Reichswehr, had built a factory in Russia to manufacture planes for the use of German fliers who were training there. Since the whole affair had to be kept a close secret, a written contract could not be drawn up. Junkers had depended on the word of the officers, and for several years everything had gone smoothly. From 1923 to 1926 the Reichswehr had shipped some seventy million gold marks to Russia. For the purpose of administering these funds a special department of the Reichswehr, Department SG, had been set up. Then, suddenly, the Reichswehr had no money left to order the planes which Junkers had to build to keep his factory running, and Junkers was left holding the bag. A general, hoping to make a little extra money, had used the funds to speculate on the stock exchange.

The scandal was hushed up for reasons of foreign policy. The liberal, democratic press did not want to investigate matters that would prove unpleasant for the Reichswehr, and the nationalist press declared that Scheidemann was a traitor to his country.

Behind the scenes, however, the scandal could not be wholly suppressed. Details came out. Details of sums and the distribution of the notorious seventy millions. Only a very small part of the money had been received by the Russians—some 250,000 marks a year was used to pay for Russian instructors, for the upkeep of German soldiers and officers, for the use of Russian apparatus, and so on.

In actual fact these 250,000 marks a year were used for an entirely different purpose.

For there was more than the secret, but more or less official, co-operation of the German and Russian military. (Official because known and approved by both governments.) There was a second activity. This was a system of large-scale espionage. It began almost at the same time as the official collaboration.

The basis for the friendly relations between the generals and certain members of the Russian Embassy in Berlin was, of course,



the discussions concerning the training of the Reichswehr in Russia. These discussions were conducted with Nicolai Nicolayevich Krestinski, who in 1921 was frequently in Berlin negotiating on economic problems. After the conclusion of the Treaty of Rapallo, Krestinski was appointed ambassador by the Soviet Government. Discussions had also been held with his predecessor, Christian Rakovski.

The generals knew, as did the generals of all the great powers, about the opposition of Leon Trotsky, the founder of the Red Army, to the regime—though this opposition was then only in its incipient stages. They knew that Krestinski and Rakovski were ardent followers of Trotsky. They knew, further, that Krestinski was changing his rubles into marks on the black bourse, at a great profit to himself (there was inflation at that time in Germany), a maneuver which was innocent, but which, if it had come to the ears of the Soviet leaders, would have meant his political and personal demise.

One word led to another and the generals finally agreed to pay Krestinski 250,000 gold marks annually, beginning in 1923. In return for this he was to turn over to the German General Staff whatever military secrets he could obtain. The negotiations between Krestinski and the generals took a long time, not because the Russian was wavering but because they could not agree on the price. The compromise sum of 250,000 marks was not reached until nearly the end of the summer of 1922, after Seeckt had broken off negotiations more than once in despair.

During the next two years numerous Russian military secrets were delivered to the German General Staff. They were transmitted by diplomatic courier and by a German General Staff officer who frequently went to Russia for maneuvers; they were also transmitted through an address in Switzerland. This last method became known to the Czech Secret Service, and thus certain photographs and documents fell into the hands of the Czech Government and its Foreign Minister and later President, Eduard Beneš.

## 4

In 1926 General Wilhelm Heye, who had already succeeded Seeckt, informed the Russians that he wished to withdraw from their agreement. The last few months had been almost fruitless as far as information went. This was because the conflict between Stalin and the Trotskyist opposition had at last flared into the open. Zinoviev and Kamenev had fallen; many of the old dependables (of the espionage net, that is) could no longer gain access to confidential information or no longer dared to transmit it.

Krestinski hinted darkly that he had splendid new connections who would supply him with excellent intelligence material. As it turned out later, he meant his connection with Marshal I. B. Gamarnik, Vice Commissar for Defense, and General Michael Nikolajewich Tukhachevsky.

The Reichswehr at that time was finding it imperative to avoid even so insignificant an expenditure as 250,000 marks. It was involved in serious financial difficulties and was having great trouble keeping its various secret armament accounts really secret. (It was at this time too that Scheidemann's revelations about the Black Reichswehr came out.) Nevertheless, additional payments were made in 1927, through the German military attaché in Moscow, to People's Commissar for Foreign Trade, Arkady Pavlovich Rosengoltz. But after the middle of 1927, no more money was paid. Krestinski was not displeased. With the confused situation in Russia, he would not have known to whom the money should be paid. Moreover, although he had publicly broken with Trotsky, he felt it was just as well to be cautious.

But in October, 1928, Heye and Herr von Hammerstein showed interest in Russian intelligence again. It seemed that the Foreign Office had asked the Army High Command whether the military intelligence service could secure certain details about an impending Franco-Russian pact. The Foreign Office also wanted to know something about the credit agree-

ment between Russia and Mussolini. Krestinski was able to supply precise answers to both questions and the Reichswehr paid him once more. From then on, there were again regular deliveries of intelligence. In the autumn of 1930, when Krestinski left Berlin, his role was taken over by others. The information they supplied almost all came directly from Tukhachevsky and Gamarnik and was transmitted through the address in Switzerland.

At this time the Reichswehr also had another iron in the fire. This was Leon Trotsky. The connection with Leon Trotsky had begun during the Russo-Polish war, and Trotsky had been a vital factor in the first discussions between the Russian and the German Armies over the question of collaboration. This was only natural since he was the leader of the Red Army. In the meantime Trotsky had become involved in an ever-sharpening conflict with Stalin; he had been pushed steadily out of political and military life, and was finally forced to leave the country.

Nevertheless the Germans were convinced that Trotsky knew a great deal about the Red Army and that he had sufficient connections within the Army to keep himself informed. They therefore approached him and inquired about the possibility of "collaboration." They did not attempt pure bribery, nor suggest pure treason. Instead they offered him a certain sum of money a year which was to be used for his movement, not for himself personally. They also suggested that the Reichswehr would support a Trotsky regime when the time was ripe for that.

It is no longer possible to say with certainty what faith Trotsky had in these assurances. In any case, he received the money for a number of years, and for years there was a connection between the Reichswehr and Trotsky through intermediaries in Paris and Brussels, and unless the secret archives of the Reichswehr are some day opened, it will not be learned just how much information he gave the Reichswehr. Judging by what one knows of Trotsky's character, it may be assumed that he gave very little, if any at all. Doubtless, he only con-

tinued the connection with the Reichswehr because he felt that his movement was important enough to employ any means in order to finance it. After all, Lenin had been smuggled into Russia during World War I through General Ludendorff; the Germans had cherished the illusion that he would "collaborate." Once in Russia he, of course, never again dreamed of collaborating with Ludendorff, but he felt that the Russian Revolution was more important. Perhaps Trotsky felt that his movement was important enough to keep contact with the German generals.

But then, Trotsky was not Lenin.

## 5

During the twenties the Germany Army was thus involved in a threefold relationship with Russia. Part of the new army was trained in Russia and its new weapons were tested there. With Tukhachevsky and Gamarnik the Germans had an espionage agreement, and a similar but slightly different agreement with Trotsky.

Quite aside from all these activities was the work of Alfred Rosenberg, the editor of Hitler's *Voelkischer Beobachter* and his chief adviser in questions of foreign policy. Rosenberg, a Balt, hated the Communists more than anything else in the world and hoped to overthrow them by a second Russian Revolution.

Rosenberg had set up a foreign office (for the Nazi Party) which occupied itself mainly with preparations for the war against the Soviet Union. This, at a time when Hitler had not yet taken power and when it still seemed highly problematical that he ever would take power.

Rosenberg's plans were based on the ideas of General Hoffmann, who was in command on the Russian front during the World War. The Ukraine was to be taken over by Germany. The rest of Russia would be ruled by a newly installed Czar, and would become a grand colony divided up according to its natural

resources. Rosenberg's chief counselor was General Pavel Skoropadsky, the last hetman (governor) of the Ukraine. The Germans had set him up in 1918 and in 1919 he had had to flee to Germany. At this time the generals did not want to have anything to do with him. They had him expelled from the country and he went to Sweden, where he continued his co-operation with Rosenberg, whom he had met while in Germany. Skoropadsky returned to Germany in 1926 and settled down in a villa in Wannsee. The house in Wannsee became the headquarters of Rosenberg's conspiracy against Russia.

Rosenberg approached the Reichswehr several times. But even when the generals had already declared themselves openly for Hitler, they could not bring themselves to work with his friend Rosenberg. In fact, even after 1933 Fritsch refused to talk with Rosenberg about the Russian question. But at the end of 1933 Hitler arranged over the heads of his generals for Skoropadsky and seven of his so-called staff officers to be given offices in the Reichswehr Ministry. There they worked out a plan for the invasion of Russia—to both the annoyance and the amusement of the generals, who considered the whole business rather comic opera.

They worked on invasion plans because by this time Rosenberg had given up the idea of revolution and decided for war. Almost every night he conferred with Skoropadsky's men in his office in the Wilhelmstrasse. Always present at these conferences was Rosenberg's mistress, a beautiful and extremely clever young Russian, Vera Schuster. She helped with the preparation of all the plans until, early in 1936, she suddenly vanished. Intelligence agents of a Western Power found out that Vera Schuster was an agent of the OGPU and had kept Moscow informed of everything that Rosenberg and Skoropadsky were planning.

Among other things, she was able to report that Rosenberg and his men were already in contact with a number of Russian generals. This contact had been established in January, 1936, when a Russian military delegation went to London to attend

the funeral of King George V and stopped over in Berlin en route.

When the delegation was on its way back it again stopped off in Berlin and this time a number of the members held a lengthy conference in Skoropadsky's house in Wannsee. From that time on, these Russian generals carried on a regular correspondence with the Germans through the Russian military attaché in London, General Kazimirovich V. Putna.

Needless to say, Tukhachevsky and Gamarnik also played the role of traitors with Rosenberg and Skoropadsky. Keeping contact through Putna was extremely easy and safe. Tukhachevsky would order Putna to Moscow in order to receive reports on military matters. Since the trip from London led through Berlin, Putna could always stop off to see Rosenberg on his way back.

## 6

Tukhachevsky wanted what the German generals had given up long before because they recognized it as impracticable and impossible to carry out successfully: a military dictatorship.

The military caste had come out of the German Revolution undefeated. In Russia, the State had defeated the military caste. The Russians faced the same problem as the German Social Democrats. In Russia, too, the professional military men were against the Revolution. But the Russians proved that a resolute State could overcome a military caste, that it could force a military caste to give up its hostility to the Revolution. In Germany between 1920 and 1923 the Ministers of the Republic had to plead with the generals not to oppose them, that is, not to oppose the majority of the people. In Russia the leaders of the government were also dependent upon the technical knowledge of their military leaders and would be dependent upon them until a new generation of generals could be trained. But that was no reason for the leaders of the Revolution to feel a fundamental distrust of their generals. They compelled them to co-operate, but they stood behind them with a gun.

And twenty years, during which the leaders of the Russian Revolution never put that gun back in its holster, were sufficient to destroy the ancient Russian military caste and to train a new leadership which has proved not only reliable but technically more efficient.

Tukhachevsky was without doubt a special case. Trotsky, who knew him well, said he was the typical ambitious general. Tukhachevsky wanted a revolt and dreamed of taking over the leadership himself. Stalin had seen clearly in the case of Germany what happened when the generals were allowed a free hand. He was perhaps the only responsible statesman in the world who correctly understood the crucial role the German Reichswehr was playing behind the scenes. He drew the logical conclusions. He risked nothing; he struck.

It does not matter that Tukhachevsky and the men around him were not all sympathetic to all of Rosenberg's plans—certainly not to the idea of a new Czar. They wanted only to get rid of Stalin and set up a military dictatorship.

In the spring of 1937 Stalin ordered General Putna to return to Moscow. Putna was wholly unsuspecting—so much so that he actually stopped over in Berlin to visit Skoropadsky on his way back to Moscow. In Moscow he was arrested. Tukhachevsky, Gamarnik, and many others were arrested and tried before a military court. Gamarnik committed suicide. The other principals were executed.

## 7

What had happened in the meanwhile to the "official" connection between the Reichswehr and the Red Army?

Until Hitler came to power, the collaboration continued. German fliers were trained in Russia, German tanks and German poison gas were tried out in Russia, and so on. When Hitler came to power Stalin wanted to break off all collaboration; he did not cherish the same illusions about Hitler as the statesmen of Great Britain. Hitler also wanted the break. Hit-

ler had grown fat on anti-bolshevist propaganda; there was nothing, aside from the Jews, that he hated so much as the Communists. That is what he claimed, at any rate.

But the military men on both sides took their time, and it was not until 1935 that the last German aviation schools in Russia were closed. Meanwhile there had been small struggles, or rather disputes, between Hitler and his Reichswehr on the question of Russia. Since the officers did not believe that Hitler seriously intended a military conflict with Russia, they wanted the Fuehrer to be more restrained in his speeches and not to rail at Russia as ferociously as he had when he was merely the leader of the Nazi Party. The officers succeeded in their efforts. During the first few years of his rule Hitler actually restrained himself, and even his favorite theme—that Germany must have the Ukraine—did not reappear in his speeches until years later.

History loves its ironies. The German generals considered the Russian Army unbeatable under ordinary circumstances. They conspired with Tukhachevsky, who was at the same time conspiring with Rosenberg. As a result of these many-sided conspiracies, Tukhachevsky and other generals were finally executed. The executions of the Russian generals, which we know today to have been the salvation of Russia and the doom of Hitler, were at the time considered a catastrophe for Russia by the whole world—and also by the German generals. The Russian executions accomplished what Hitler and Rosenberg could never have accomplished: they convinced the generals that it was possible to think seriously of war with Russia.

The German generals—and incidentally many experts all over the world—simply could not believe that the army of any country was a dangerous military factor when all its old leaders had been removed.

## 8

In October, 1938, detailed plans for the invasion of Russia already existed in the German General Staff. Nevertheless, Ludwig Beck had never seriously considered the possibility of a



Russo-German war. Even the Chief of the Operations Department, General von Wietersheim, who had worked out the plans, was firmly convinced that they would never be put into practice. We will return later to Wietersheim and his position on the war with Russia.

Ludwig Beck was disturbed by the activities of Russian Foreign Minister Litvinov and feared that Russia would intervene if the German Army marched on Prague. He was even more disturbed by the opinion of the Chief of the High Command, Wilhelm Keitel, who continued to declare that he saw no real reason why they should avoid a war with Russia.

Beck finally spoke to von Brauchitsch and Brauchitsch promised him solemnly that before he undertook any action against Poland he would demand of Hitler a definite peace or neutrality agreement with Russia.

Then Ludwig Beck once more asked for an audience with Hitler. This was in the last days of October. Beck never spoke of what happened at this audience. But afterward he resigned from the General Staff and asked to be retired.

The official reason given for Ludwig Beck's resignation was Hitler's alleged refusal to permit the rigorous execution of the Army regulation that officers could not belong to the Nazi Party.

But this was probably one of the least important matters the two men discussed. The crucial point was the memorandum Beck had handed to Hitler. The events of the next few months proved that Hitler was not in accord with the Chief of the General Staff.

Beck resigned because he alone of all the generals saw what must inevitably happen.

# THE BETRAYAL OF A CASTE

## I

LUDWIG BECK packed his bags and went to his home town of Krefeld. For a few days he stayed in the only good hotel in the town, the *Europäischer Hof*. He signed the register: Ludwig Beck. For he had not only handed in his resignation as Chief of Staff; he had gone a step further. He had left the Army, given up his title of general. He had done something that had scarcely ever happened during the centuries-long history of the Prussian Army.

He had had enough. He wanted to make the break clear and definite. He did not want anything more to do with the Army. He did not even want his military title.

For a while he even thought of emigrating. After a brief stay in Krefeld he went to his beloved Paris—for the last time. There he remained only a few days. The reason he gave for this trip was to visit his only daughter whom he had had educated in a boarding school in France; strangely enough, the Chief of the German General Staff had his daughter educated in France. But when he returned to Krefeld he left behind him with a good friend in Paris that eighty-page memorandum in which he had warned Hitler of the danger of world war and the impossibility of winning it. Today that memorandum is in the United States—in the safe of one of the great New York hotels.

There are a number of different explanations as to why Ludwig Beck did not emigrate. One of these is that he had no money abroad. Another, that Hitler probably would not have allowed a man who knew as much as Beck to remain abroad.

And undoubtedly the Gestapo could easily have found him in Paris and silenced him forever.

As a matter of fact, the Gestapo kept a careful watch over him when he was in Krefeld. Beck knew this and shrugged.

Beck, his wife, and his daughter, who shortly afterward came to stay with her parents, moved to Dortmunder Strasse 26. Here was the old family house, big, comfortable, and old-fashioned.

Life in Krefeld was not particularly interesting. The town, situated near Duesseldorf, with some one hundred and seventy thousand inhabitants, has no special attractions. Most of the inhabitants are textile workers. Town society consists of textile manufacturers. Ludwig Beck, though he came from a family of old silk weavers, did not find their society stimulating. The higher Army officers in Krefeld, Duesseldorf and Cologne shunned him from the first, probably on instructions from Berlin. But Ludwig Beck could do without their company. If men like Keitel, Reichenau, and Brauchitsch got on his nerves because of their limited intelligence, he certainly could not expect much intellectual enjoyment from the officers in the Rhineland.

He went walking a good deal. He walked briskly, in an almost jaunty way. He still looked quite young—indeed, he was very young for a retired general. In his civilian clothes he seemed more than ever like an intellectual, a scholar, and no one who had not known him formerly would have recognized this slender man in his baggy suits, which he wore with the careless elegance of an Englishman, as a German Chief of Staff.

Beck read a good deal. He read lots of new French novels. He also read history. Once again he went through the entire history of Brandenburg-Prussia. He busied himself with the French Revolution. But above all he returned again and again to reading about the men with whom he had spent his life. Or rather, about the caste to which he belonged, the Junker caste, the East Elbians, the Prussian nobility.

This information about Beck's personal life is taken from the

many letters he wrote to friends abroad. For a time most of his letters were sent to Paris. Then, ten months after the beginning of his voluntary exile, when the war broke out, he sent his letters to Switzerland. From here they were forwarded first to Paris and later to the United States.

Probably most of these letters were read by the Gestapo. But Beck wrote in a language that Hitler's officials could not understand, even when he wrote in German, though most of the letters were in French. Probably they finally gave up reading his letters. They may have concluded that he was slightly crazy.

But Beck was not crazy. Beck was simply trying to think things out. Beck wanted to draw up an accounting of his whole previous life. And of the men by whom his life had been determined, the members of the German military caste.

In contrast to von Seeckt, who had once stated that no such thing as a military caste existed in Germany, Beck never for a moment doubted its existence. But he did not agree that it was identical with the caste of Junkers. He believed that in the course of the past century, and especially during the last fifty years, a military caste had grown up that was more a military caste than a Junker caste. Until World War I it had indeed consisted mainly of Junkers. But even then the members of the caste were more militarists than landowners. And during and after World War I that contradiction had sharpened.

This had happened partly because in the first months of World War I an enormous number of these men had fallen. Then, after the war, because they were impoverished and their estates were debt-ridden. The future of the caste after 1918 lay with the Army, no matter where it had lain before.

Beck studied the question of how this caste had managed to remain unchanged, despite the French Revolution with its destruction of the feudal era, despite the liberal nineteenth century, despite the collapse of the post-war years. He came to the conclusion that in other countries the generals had remained a professional group that was useful only under excep-

tional conditions—that is, in wartime. But in Germany they had exercised considerable influence even in peacetime. Their mere existence, their presence, and the nimbus with which they surrounded themselves, their exclusiveness, and the fact that in every generation the same families provided officers who continued the tradition of the Army and the tradition of the families—all these things contributed to their remaining unchanged as a caste despite the changes brought about by history.

Beck did not deny that the caste was guilty of many evils through the centuries. In fact, he emphasized this. But it had never been guilty of treason to itself. The caste had always been loyal to itself.

Always—until the moment they backed Hitler. At that moment there began what might be called the self-betrayal of the caste. Beck formulated it differently, more hesitatingly and indirectly, but this is what it came down to.

Hitler was the living negation of the world of the military clique. Hitler was hysteria; for centuries the caste had represented discipline. Hitler was an adventurer; the caste had always stood for rigid order. Hitler was arbitrary; the caste had always stood for tradition.

Beck considered carefully the religious question. He admitted that religion had meant to the caste, and to Beck himself, less a question of conscience than a practical and necessary condition for a regulated, disciplined life. They were Lutheran, they went to church, they did not question. They saw to it that the people also went to church and that they also did not question. That was good for discipline; it kept the people quiet.

The persecution of priests and of laymen for their religious beliefs was repulsive and, moreover, opened the door to conditions that would ultimately get out of control. The burning of synagogues—such things weren't done. Germany was not the Balkans. Imprisoning Pastor Niemöller—such things weren't done. Whatever one thought of the Church and of faith, whatever one thought of God—these things were good; they helped maintain order and simple, understandable conditions.

Fritsch had been quite right in his protest when Rosenberg had tried to preach his "German religion," that is, paganism, in the barracks. But the other generals had said nothing. The other generals said nothing, no matter what happened. With few exceptions, they had said nothing when the Reichstag was burned; they had said nothing when Jews were beaten senseless in the streets; they had even said nothing when General von Schleicher and Colonel von Bredow were murdered.

The caste by its silence was surrendering. They were losing out because they turned their heads the other way, because they were indifferent, because they said: "This doesn't concern us." The caste was losing the very ground on which it had developed: peace, order, and discipline. It was losing out because through silence, it became the accomplice of crime.

The caste was losing out because for the sake of titles, for the sake of external show, it was sanctioning and even promoting a development that could only end with its own disappearance, with its absorption into the masses. Once upon a time only a select few could have the privilege of becoming officers. Up to a few years ago, a limited few decided who was worthy to lead the Army or to hold a leading position in the Army. But the time of the Military Academy was past. The Academy still existed, it was true, but now there were so many military schools all over Germany that it no longer mattered where one studied. Even at Berlin University anyone could now study to become a General Staff officer. Anyone—that was it. In a few years there would be no such thing as exclusiveness. Nazi students who did not know how to behave, let alone how to think, who possessed nothing but uncritical enthusiasm and stupid emotionalism, would come up from all sides, would swamp the General Staff; shouting and sweating, they would press to the wall those who had served for centuries.

Did the generals realize this? Did they realize how dearly they had bought the few advantages they now enjoyed—the honor of leading a greater army, the possibility of a swifter career because generals were needed? Did they realize that

they were dying men, even if the great war did not come, even if some unprecedented miracle averted the approaching external catastrophe? Did they realize they could no longer escape the internal catastrophe?

It may seem strange that a man named Ludwig Beck, and not Ludwig *von* Beck, should study so obstinately the caste to which he did not belong. But he was not an outsider in reality. He came from a very old, fine, exclusive family; therefore he was accepted. But undoubtedly it is the very circumstance that he did not belong so completely as those generals with ancient patents of nobility that enabled him to examine these problems more critically. A certain perspective is necessary for criticism. The others, who belonged wholly to the caste, did not have the perspective. They had no doubts at all. Nor critical minds.

Surely, Beck did not think much of these others. There were some exceptions. Old Kress von Kressenstein had emigrated to Switzerland in disgust in February, 1938. Old Hammerstein-Equord continued his struggle against Hitler, alone, bitter, courageous. Fritsch had at least not trembled before the Fuehrer; he had staked everything on one card and proved a good loser.

But Beck, who knew the German nobility, "found few nobles among them." The von Reichenaus, von Bocks, von Brauchitsches, von Leebs, von Rundstedts—all of them had something against Hitler. None of them liked him. Many of them made fun of him. Herr von Kleist, for example, had refused to associate with Nazis. He had gone so far as to refuse scornfully when Goering suggested to him that they address each other with the familiar *du*. Herr von Rundstedt had once almost led a revolt. But he had changed his mind. Herr von Reichenau had been outraged by what he called "an idiotic invention"—the ancestor cult that Hitler had introduced and all the nonsense about Aryanism. "We have the ancestors," Herr von Reichenau had declared haughtily. But he had not said that when Hitler could hear it.

And the precious Herr von Brauchitsch, who had once said in Koenigsberg that he wanted to shoot down the entire SA and SS, now took orders from the man who had founded the SA and SS.

Why? Why? Why did they accept this *petit bourgeois* who at best wanted to turn Germany into a grand servants' quarter in which they could no longer have a place? Because he had left them their estates? Because he promoted them? Or because they were afraid?

In the last letter Beck sent to Switzerland, in the late summer of 1941, he spoke more bitterly than ever of the generals as "breakers of their oath."

This they were. They had sworn loyalty to the Kaiser. Then to the Republic. Then to Hindenburg. And finally to Hitler.

As a matter of fact, Ludwig Beck himself had also sworn these four oaths. He was no less an oath-breaker than the others, whom he now denounced. He had been confused, as they had been confused. He had been instrumental in bringing Hitler to power, perhaps more than most of them. He had believed that it was necessary to rearm, to show strength, to correct, if it could be done without war, the Eastern frontier. But at least when he saw that war was inevitable, he changed his mind. At least he realized now where he had been wrong. He had not closed his eyes. He saw the abyss without and the abyss within.

## 2

Beck had been both right and wrong in his condemnation of the military caste. The caste had indeed betrayed itself by accepting and then supporting Hitler. The caste had signed its own death warrant. But what Beck could not understand was the inevitable causal connections. If the caste had still been strong and healthy; if, in fact, it had still been really a caste, it would not have allowed Hitler to come to power, let alone helped him. The fact that they had dealings with the Bohemian Corporal was not only a betrayal of themselves, it was proof that



the decay and the collapse had already begun. The generals were no longer what they had once been. The great tradition of the military caste had been simplicity. Schlieffen had coined their motto: "Be more than you seem." The great contradiction between the Prussian generals and the Kaiser had rested on their objection to the Byzantine bombast of the Hohenzollern. But now they all became bombastic, and now they all began to talk as the Kaiser had talked—worse still, as Hitler talked. There was no longer any question of their being more than they seemed; they did their best to seem as much as possible. They became publicity conscious. They wanted to be photographed, interviewed, as much as possible.

One of the great virtues of the Prussian officer had been his comradeship. This was the very binding force that had forged these men into a caste and held them together even under difficult conditions.

But there was little of that comradeship left now. Jealousy came to the fore. It was the jealousy of prima donnas that had taken possession of them. They were irritated when another general was honored or received an important commission; they were even irritated, as some American correspondents can testify, when one general was interviewed or photographed more often than the others. Of course, there had always been jealousy among the generals, especially during World War I, but there had been a certain code of honor which did not allow them to voice such feelings, less than ever to act upon them. Now the code of honor no longer existed—except on paper. They began to fear one another, not without cause, for they were always intriguing against their old friends and therefore had to expect these old friends to intrigue against them. All this began with trivialities, but it got worse and worse. Above them all hovered the Sword of Damocles, held by Herr Hitler, his Gestapo, and its notorious RW dossiers, which contained everything about them: what they did, what they had said, perhaps even what they had not said. Early in 1938 they had united once more to fight Himmler and these dossiers. They had formed a front that

Himmler could not break; now each supported the others by working temporarily with Himmler and giving him information that they hoped would be transmitted to Hitler and hamper the careers of their good old friends.

The gulf broadened steadily.

Only in one thing did the generals of the old school, the representatives of the military caste, agree. That was in their dislike for the newcomers, and in their struggle against the newcomers.

All of them despised General Siegmund Wilhelm Walter List, a big unpleasant-looking man with the aspect of a proletarian and uncultured manners. A *petit bourgeois* who certainly did not belong. But he had been colonel of Hitler's regiment in World War I. That meant he was somebody the generals simply had to reckon with. He was also a good tank specialist and a specialist in mountain warfare. But the Propaganda Ministry made him a genius, which as the others knew, he definitely was not.

They were horrified by Wilhelm Keitel, who also did not belong and whom they considered the most stupid general in the Army. They jeered at him because he imitated the mannerisms of the Fuehrer, because he could stare icily, because with Caesar-ean assurance he would leave questions unanswered, and finally—a personal note the generals found particularly piquant—he would retire at moments when big decisions had to be made and which he could not make, and would play phonograph records of Beethoven symphonies for hours at a time. For inspiration, of course.

Hitler's particular friend, Colonel Jodl, who was always around the Fuehrer, disgusted them. Perhaps they had never forgiven this careerist for having betrayed them and for having informed the Fuehrer of Fritsch's secret meeting. Although they themselves hardly dared contradict Hitler, it got on their nerves that this Jodl always yessed Hitler and thus won the reputation with him of being a military genius.

They despised particularly the tank expert, Guderian. First

because he was a tank expert—anyone who had anything to do with tanks to them was a mechanic, not a soldier. And secondly because he had done something that an officer did not do. He had written a popular book called *Achtung Panzer* ("Watch Out for the Tanks"), in which he explained to the masses—to the people, of all things—the necessity for mechanized warfare. Worse yet, the book had become a best seller. Such matters were military concerns of the General Staff; the people were not supposed to study about them.

Then there was *Obersileutnant* Schmidt, Hitler's adjutant, who had himself photographed carrying Hitler's jacket. After all, an officer didn't carry anyone's jacket. Or Jodl, who had himself photographed dragging boxes full of sand, with which he was to form models of battle situations, in order to explain a strategical problem to Hitler. An officer didn't drag boxes of sand around; there were orderlies for that sort of thing.

Each one fought against the other; the military caste no longer formed a common front. Rather, there were a number of fronts. Von Bock, von Rundstedt, von Leeb, and von Kleist preferred each other's company to that of von Brauchitsch and von Reichenau, who got on so splendidly with Hitler, and to that of List, Jodl, and Keitel who were Nazis rather than officers.

All of them together gazed worriedly at the group of younger officers, mostly colonels or captains, who were on the point of making great careers for themselves. For the sake of their careers they had become full-fledged Nazis. To this group belonged Foertsch, Johst, Mueller-Loebnitz, Warlimont, Schell, and many others.

Yes, that was the trouble with the expanded Army. There were too many others who could make careers. Never before in Germany had so many young men gone up the ladder with such speed. Now you could be a full lieutenant at twenty-three, a major at thirty-six, a lieutenant general and even a full general at forty-five. There were so many young officers and their careers were so swift that the old generals could see the time

coming when they would be only a small minority even in the highest ranks of the Army. Perhaps the generals realized that it was precisely this that was intended; that this was one of the Nazis' weapons against them. And that they were powerless against it. They knew, of course, that these spruce young officers lacked experience, and that in time of emergency experience is more important than the Party book. But it did not help them to know this and to think about it. Their thoughts did not stop this development; the young officers rose no less swiftly and began to voice their opinions in matters of which they understood little.

Yes, all of a sudden these young men claimed to be great strategists. To listen to them, war-making was all very simple. There were no problems of tactics, strategy, reserve, supply, munitions; there was only the one fact that Germany was stronger than any other country in the world; Germany would win any war against any enemy. The Fuehrer would see to that.

It was bad enough for the old generals to have to listen to such statements. But even as they were clearing their throats to retort sharply and put the young ignoramuses in their place, the war broke out.

### 3

General von Brauchitsch kept his promise to Ludwig Beck. Again and again he pressed Hitler to conclude a pact, if possible an alliance, with Russia before the war with Poland began. And on August 23, 1939, the pact was concluded. But Brauchitsch still hesitated, waited until the pact had been ratified by the Council of People's Commissars, and waited still longer for the pact to be supplemented by a promise of aid. But then he did not lose a minute in striking.

The Polish-German border was extremely complicated. East Prussia, bordering on the Baltic Sea in the north, was an island within Poland. Going from east to west from East Prussia, you crossed the Polish Corridor and then came to Pomerania.

Following along the border, which made this part of Poland a kind of peninsula reaching into Germany, you passed along Silesia, and then, in the south, along Slovakia. Aside from the Carpathians in the south, Poland was a flat plain. Almost all the streams were dry at this time of the year; even the Vistula was low.

There were enough soldiers in the Polish Army, but their equipment was poor. All in all, some thirty-six Polish divisions fought in the war. If there had been more time for mobilization, the number could almost have been doubled. That there was not more time for mobilization was a triumph of Hitler's policy. Up to the very moment he attacked Poland he let it appear as though a settlement were possible. Therefore, most of the Polish mobilization, as far as it went, was executed during the first days of war.

Of the fifteen hundred planes and the several hundred tanks and armored cars that the Poles possessed, more than half were obsolete.

In the face of the immense German superiority, the only possible kind of war the Poles could fight was a defensive war. They had planned to base their resistance on a line built in peacetime which ran in the shape of a bow northeast from Warsaw, then westward, following in the north the lines of the Rissa, Narev, and Bug rivers to Modlin (northwest of Warsaw), then south along the right bank of the Vistula, from where it ran along the right bank of the San to the Carpathian Mountains.

According to plan, all troops stationed to the west, north, and south of this line were to retreat slowly to the line, fighting as they fell back. An army of four divisions was ranged against East Prussia, an army of three divisions in the Corridor, the main army of twelve divisions in the province of Poznan, and a southern army of six divisions against Slovakia. This last army was entrusted with the protection of the industrial regions. The rest of the Polish Army was in the fortresses.

The Germans launched against Poland sixty divisions (each

of twenty thousand men), four motorized divisions, and seven armored divisions, and some ten thousand planes.

Two army groups were formed. A southern group under Colonel General von Rundstedt (under whom List, von Reichenau, and von Blaskowitz commanded three separate armies) and a northern group under von Bock (under whom von Kuechler and von Kluge commanded two separate armies. Kuechler had his army in Pomerania, von Kluge his in East Prussia). Each of these armies was ten to twelve divisions strong, not including the motorized troops, the tank troops, and the Alpine divisions.

The attack began at 4:45 A.M. on the morning of September 1, while the Poles were still in the midst of their mobilization.

The operative goal of the Germans was to reach a line which ran from north to south; that is, from East Prussia to Slovakia. The line passed approximately through the center of Warsaw and extended west of the Polish line of fortifications. This line the Germans intended to reach before the retreating Polish armies could get there and thereby the Germans could cut off all the Polish troops west of Warsaw.

The southern army group, on September 2, passed the Jablonka Pass in the Beskide Mountains (west of the Carpathians); on September 3 it crossed the Vistula and took Czeszochowa; on September 4 it broke through the Sieradz-Czeszochowa line, which was to have been held by two Polish divisions. This break-through endangered the Polish army in Poznan whose left flank was now uncovered. On September 5 List's army controlled all the passes of the Beskides as well as the industrial region of Katowice. On September 8 the southern army stood at the gates of Warsaw. Two armies now turned north across the Vistula, the third went on eastward.

Meanwhile, the army in Pomerania (of the northern army group) and the right wing of the army in East Prussia had advanced to Graudenz and Bromberg. On September 4 the Poles abandoned the Polish Corridor; one division was completely encircled, the remainder of the two other divisions escaped. The left wing of the East Prussian army encountered

the strongest resistance. It did not reach Drogan on the Narev until September 6. The Poles sent in cavalry against the German tanks—a brave but hopeless undertaking that finally collapsed after tremendous losses. The Poles, forced to mobilize while bombed from the air and attacked from different sides, crowded the roads and the railways and were by now completely confused. The surprise had achieved its purpose. The German air attacks continued to rupture the communication lines. Since most of the Polish Air Force had been destroyed on the ground, the German bombers could drop their explosives unhindered wherever they found troop concentrations.

During all this time the main Polish Army waited for seven days in Poznan without seeing a sign of the enemy or firing a shot. The Polish High Command did not give the orders to retreat until September 7, by which time the Germans had long been operating in the rear of the army and had almost reached Warsaw. This cannot be explained as a result of the German surprise tactics (if there can be any talk of surprise at all when the war had been expected for months). It appears to have been sabotage within the Polish clique of generals.

On September 10 the battle west of Warsaw began. Five Polish divisions and two cavalry brigades faced the left flank of the southern army group (the Silesian army under Blaskowitz) and the greater part of the northern army group (the Pomeranian army under Kuechler and the right wing of the East Prussian army under Kluge). In the course of the next few days the Polish forces were increased to nine divisions, which were joined by the remains of ten divisions and three cavalry brigades. That is to say, all that was left of the Polish Army retreated to the defense line west of Warsaw.

On September 13 the southern army group reached the Lwow-Lublin line. The Poles encircled at Radom capitulated. At Limza an entire Polish division was captured. Lodz fell.

On September 14 the outer forts of Brest-Litovsk fell, on

the 15th Bialystok fell, on the 16th Lwow had been encircled on three sides.

On the 17th the Red Army began to march into Eastern Poland. It took twenty thousand prisoners without a battle. On September 27 Warsaw and Modlin surrendered.

#### 4

The German plan was, to put it mildly, unorthodox.

It provided for armies that would attack from the north and from the south. The operational goals of these armies were far in the rear of the main Polish forces. But the Germans did not consider it necessary to pay any attention to these main forces. The logical or orthodox plan would have been to engage the main Polish forces frontally with at least a part of the German battle forces. And then there was the extraordinary risk of allowing two separate army groups to operate and to unite only after the battle was won. In a "regular war" this would have been far too risky.

All of which proves that Brauchitsch was not waging a regular war but a brief campaign. He entered upon this campaign absolutely certain of victory. He counted—quite correctly—upon the advantages that would spring from surprise, sabotage, panic, and his enormous material superiority.

He also reckoned that the Western Powers would not launch a diversionary offensive, which they undoubtedly would have attempted had this been a "regular" war. In such case, the fifty divisions he had left to guard the Western border would hardly have been able to offer serious resistance. But since the Franco-British declarations of war were little more than symbolic gestures, the fifty divisions were more than enough.

The Polish blitzkrieg and *blitzsieg* (lightning victory) which so amazed and frightened the world were, therefore, strategically and tactically nothing very special. There had been no need for any particular effort. Nevertheless, Brauchitsch's pres-



tige within Germany increased enormously. He was the man of the hour, "the new Hindenburg."

But the other generals knew that he was still no more than a mediocrity.

Up to that time they had not yet decided what to think of the new Chief of the General Staff, Ludwig Beck's successor, Franz Halder. The job he had done on the Polish campaign was childishly simple. Moreover, significant sections of the maneuver had been taken over from Ludwig Beck's original plan.

Outwardly, Franz Halder was not particularly impressive. Although old compared to the majority of active German generals—he was over sixty—his black hair was still thick and only starting to gray at the temples. He wore it combed far back from his high forehead. His face was more like a bank clerk's or a petty official's than like that of a general. His small mustache and his pince-nez certainly did not give the lean, slightly bent, and somehow soft melancholy man a military or martial air.

Franz Halder was a Bavarian—that is, one of those who did not "belong." Until November 1, 1938, he had been Reichenau's Chief of Staff in Munich (Seventh Military District). Then Hitler had sent for him and the generals guessed that he would be another Keitel. They knew that Hitler wanted to have in a commanding position a yes-man who would always take orders from him.

The generals did not know much about Halder. Consequently, they told a great many stories about his past. To be sure, none of them knew for sure whether the stories were true or not, but they were good stories.

There were some facts, of course. Since 1920 Halder had worked on the Bavarian General Staff. Obviously he had not distinguished himself in the first World War, otherwise he would not have remained a lowly captain throughout four years of war. His real military career did not begin until after the war. On the Bavarian General Staff he worked under von

Lossow, along with Captain Roehm. Among other things, it was his task to hire the "political speakers" who were supposed to win the soldiers away from the Revolution and back to the ideals of the Army. In the course of that work he became acquainted with Hitler, though at first the Nazi leader apparently made little impression upon him. But he remained in contact with Hitler, even after the unsuccessful putsch of November, 1923. When Roehm left the Reichswehr, Halder remained with the General Staff. According to trustworthy sources, he served as a kind of spy for Hitler, keeping him informed about the activities of Herr von Lossow and his clique.

Whatever the case, Hitler sent for him. And from the very first it was clear that no matter what Franz Halder thought of Hitler's personality, he was in agreement with him on methods of warfare. And in disagreement with the majority of the older generals. For the latter it was axiomatic that wars should be won with the smallest possible losses, and with scrupulous avoidance of unnecessary losses on the part of the enemy—especially the enemy civilian population.

Franz Halder, however, declared himself unconditionally for a blitzkrieg à la Hitler. Shortly before the war, at a gathering of officers and Party members in the Military Academy, he advocated: "A combination of air attacks stupendous in their mass effect; surprise, terror, sabotage, assassination of government leaders; overwhelming attacks on all weak points; sudden onslaughts without regard for reserves or losses."

## 5

The Polish war rather got on the generals' nerves. Mainly because the Hitler blitzkrieg technique which the new Chief of Staff prized so highly was used. Though they didn't talk much about it, they felt that this was not the way war ought to be waged.

Hitler himself got on their nerves, too. They didn't like the

idea of Hitler going to the front and setting up his own headquarters. That was striving for effect; it was an attempt to increase his own popularity; it was highly unprofessional.

In Hitler's headquarters there were, among others, Goering, Keitel, Jodl, and a protégé of List's, a man who was to become a sensation with tanks: Erwin Rommel. In Brauchitsch's headquarters, Hitler's headquarters was looked at askance, and the men around Brauchitsch were annoyed at every communiqué issued there. The generals said of Hitler, "Why is he dancing around at the front?" (*Warum turnt er hier an der Front herum?*) That became a standing phrase.

Twice Hitler intervened in the actual military operations. Once he insisted that a number of SS regiments be sent to the front. That was before Lemberg. The other time he demanded that Warsaw be bombed.

The generals were against any such bombardment. It appeared to them futile destruction which could hasten the ultimate surrender by only a few days. It was unprofessional to sacrifice so many human lives and such great values, just for a spectacular effect. German generals, incidentally, had always been against such measures. When in 1871, with the Prussian Army at the gates of Paris, Bismarck wanted a bombardment of the French capital, Moltke refused flatly. Bismarck appealed to the Prussian King who backed his general against his Prime Minister.

But in 1939 the generals had to obey Hitler. The SS was sent to the Lwow front; to the secret joy of the generals it proved wholly ineffective and lost many men.

Only one of them had the courage to tell Hitler to his face what they all thought of his "dancing." He was General Johannes Blaskowitz, who during the Polish campaign proved to be the most successful individual general.

Blaskowitz told Hitler what he thought of the SS and of the bombardment of Warsaw. The general, a very good-looking man of noble family, must have been enraged indeed to speak thus to the Fuehrer, because up to this point he seemed to

be one of his admirers. Photographs show that his mustache, in 1935 still long and thick, had become in 1937 much smaller and by 1939 was a duplicate of Hitler's mustache. If this is an indication—

Hitler took offense. And so Blaskowitz was not promoted to Field Marshal, which he deserved. In fact, since the end of the Polish campaign he has vanished into obscurity. But his latest photographs show that his mustache has once more become a long and broad mustache, no more resembling that of his Fuehrer.

## ATONEMENT

THE PATROL is a remnant of old-style warfare. In modern war you try to find out the enemy's position by air reconnaissance. That is simpler, faster, and more reliable. But sometimes the clouds or the fog are so heavy that planes cannot be used for reconnaissance. And then, too, of course, not every regiment has planes at its disposal. The infantry still "sees with its legs."

On September 22, 1939, there was heavy fog.

Why did Herr von Fritsch join a patrol that was sent out to determine an insignificant detail about the enemy line? We might as well ask why he had entered the Polish War at all.

After his removal as Chief of the Army he had settled down in Leipzig, and there he lived a peaceful, retired life. Then, when the war came, he went out into the field with "his regiment"—it will be remembered that he had been appointed honorary colonel of a regiment. Perhaps it seemed to him absurd that he, once Chief of the German Army, should not participate at all in the Army's first war. Once—that was scarcely eighteen months ago. Perhaps, too, he had his own special reasons.

In any case he went to war with "his" regiment—the Twelfth Artillery Regiment (Berlin). That is, he took part in the advances. Which meant that he rode behind the troops on horseback or drove behind them in his car. Of course, there was a regular Colonel. Fritsch had nothing special to do; he had no responsibility; he simply went along. Maybe he did not even find it very interesting.

But why did he and his adjutant go along with this patrol? Perhaps because they were bored. Perhaps with something of

the attitude of the old athlete who decides to test his skill in the game of his youth. Or perhaps he had his own reason. If he did, none of the people around him had any inkling of it. Later they said he had been grave and very silent. But then he had always been like that, they added.

What could Herr von Fritsch have been thinking of as he rode forward through the mist? Perhaps he was thinking of nothing. Perhaps he felt rather pleased and excited at the little adventure, at being in the midst of things once more—though it was really nothing much and scarcely worth the name of adventure. Still, it was the first time in more than twenty years that this sort of thing had happened to him. Although General von Fritsch must certainly have thought the next time would be quite different from this.

The little group that Fritsch had joined caught sight of the lonely house on the road, half demolished by shellfire. They thought it was deserted. But suddenly the rattle of machine-gun fire came from the house. A bullet from the heavy Polish machine gun struck Fritsch in the thigh and penetrated an artery. A young lieutenant bent over the fallen general and tried to apply a tourniquet.

Herr von Fritsch said softly: "Please don't bother about me."

Why did he say that? A torn artery—you can very soon bleed to death from that. The bleeding has to be stopped quickly or it is all over.

Later they said that after two minutes Herr von Fritsch was dead. But two minutes can be a long time if you use it to think things over and if you know they are the last two minutes you will ever have to think things over. Two minutes ... one hundred and twenty seconds. Time to think about a great many things.

They say that a dying man reviews his whole life in a few seconds. Perhaps that is only an invention of writers. But we can well imagine that General von Fritsch thought of a good many things during those two last minutes of his life.

Perhaps he thought of the bombardment of Warsaw and that

thousands and tens of thousands of human beings were dying unnecessarily. Perhaps he thought of his last interview with the Fuehrer and how everything might have been so different if that interview with Hitler in January, 1938, had turned out differently. Perhaps his mind went further back, to 1934, to that June day when they had murdered von Schleicher and von Bredow. And when none of the generals, not even he himself, had protested. Perhaps he thought, too, of how it had all begun and why it had to come out as it had, why it was necessary to make this Bohemian Corporal great and hand him power to do with as he would. Perhaps he thought that it was easy to make a man great and hand him power, but that one never could know how it would turn out. Perhaps a few lines of Goethe, the great German poet, ran through his head—lines about the sorcerer's apprentice who could call forth the spirit but could not get rid of it again.

Perhaps he thought of his old friend, Ludwig Beck, and wished him a last farewell across the hundreds of miles of mountains and valleys, rivers and towns, that separated them. Beck... yes, Beck had foreseen a catastrophic future. He had said that all this would lead to a terrible world war and the annihilation of Germany. Perhaps Fritsch thought this because a dying man can allow himself the luxury of thinking anything, even unpatriotic, almost nihilistic thoughts. Thoughts that a general, even one who has been removed from his post and sent home, could never, never allow himself to think. And if he had a little more time, another second or two perhaps, Fritsch may have thought of who and what was responsible for all this. Who had really begun it? That question, too, he must certainly have avoided during all these past months, for that was another question a Prussian general does not ask himself. But now, in this last second, nothing was forbidden. And if in this last second he did ask himself the question, and answered it, then he knew what no one else in the world will ever know with certainty. Then he knew why he had gone along on the patrol. Then he knew why he had said to the young lieutenant who had

wanted to stop the outpouring blood: "Please don't bother about me."

For he had said that, and nothing more. Then the mask that was the face of Herr von Fritsch had become a little harder and more unreal and the mouth had closed a little tighter.

Under heavy fire they carried his body back to the German lines.







# THE POWER AND THE GLORY

## I

AT THE inspection of the ruins of Warsaw on October 6, 1939, Hitler declared to foreign correspondents:

"I only wish that certain statesmen in other countries who seem to want to turn the whole of Western Europe into such a shambles as Warsaw could have an opportunity of seeing, as you have, the real meaning of war."

Eight days later he stood before the Reichstag, in the hall of the old Kroll Opera House which was decorated with Swastika flags. For the first time the Japanese flag was also flown at a session of the Reichstag.

Hitler's speech was a last offer of peace to the world. The conditions of his peace were:

1. Russia and Germany were to have a free hand in Poland.
2. The Jewish question in Europe was to be solved by the creation of restricted areas for Jews in Poland.
3. Germany and Russia were to be allowed a free hand in Southeastern Europe and the existing minority problems there were to be solved without the intervention or interference of other countries.
4. Germany would give up all additional territorial claims, aside from reasonable colonial possessions. Hitler expressly recognized the existing boundaries in the West and emphasized that Alsace-Lorraine presented no problem.
5. Hitler declared himself in favor of international disarmament—as far as that was possible.

Such a peace offer after the successful Polish campaign was only logical. Logical especially from the viewpoint of the generals. Those who believed the triumph in Poland might

convert them to the idea of plunging from this campaign into a world war were in error. The Chief of the Army, General von Brauchitsch, constantly stressed this in private conversation. For him nothing had changed. The Polish campaign had had the very outcome everybody had foreseen. The victory proved nothing he had not known before. His appetite did not increase with eating. He knew, as did all the generals, that the Army was ready for small campaigns but not for a big-scale, long war. Hitler had promised his generals to arrange a campaign but to avoid a war.

It is therefore logical to assume that Hitler's peace offer was made directly or indirectly on the instigation of von Brauchitsch and the other generals.

Whether Hitler sincerely hoped for peace at that moment is another question. In his speech of July 20, 1940, he candidly admitted that he had expected no positive reaction to his first peace offer. There were various reasons for this. One of these—we will discuss this more fully in a moment—was that unlike his generals he believed that a continuation of the war would be no more than a second campaign—a campaign that the German Army was quite ready for.

The other reason was not military but political. The generals wanted to wage only the kind of wars they could win. They did not wish to plunge their Army into an adventure that might ruin it and them. For them there was no other view possible. But for Hitler there was. After so many years of the extreme effort he had demanded of the entire German people, he could not simply return to the normal economic order. Even a temporary dismissal of large sections of the Army, not to mention a temporary slowdown of the munitions industry, would have meant large-scale unemployment, therefore discontent and the possibility of revolution. The other cited "dynamics" of Hitler and National Socialism had a very real and necessary basis. The generals did not want a war right then. Hitler needed it.

An article that was published in the *Voelkischer Beobachter*

on November 7, 1941—almost two years later—declared on the subject of "Politics and Warfare":

"The phrase of Clausewitz that war is only the continuation of politics by other methods is often quoted but not well enough understood. Although much of Clausewitz' work is already dated, his remark on the connection between politics and warfare should have helped us understand the introductory sentence better. To be sure, Clausewitz says the political element does not penetrate deeply into the details of warfare. Sentinels are not posted and engagements fought by political consideration. But the influence of this element is all the more decisive in the outlining of the whole war, the campaign and often the battle."

If the generals had read these words before the beginning or even after the end of the Polish campaign, they would have understood a number of things. They would have realized that Hitler had no intention of acceding to their wishes wherever these ran counter to his own ideas. They would have grasped the fact that Hitler had no thought of arranging a campaign for them and then giving them time to prepare a new campaign or possibly a war. They would have understood that to Hitler the beginning of open hostilities did not mean that from then on he would take advice from the generals—certainly not that he would be led by them, if their advice interfered with his politics. For war was indeed the continuation of his politics "by other methods."

The methods were not the important thing. Politics—that was what counted. So that in the final analysis there was never any such thing as the generals' campaign. There was only Hitler's war.

## 2

What Hitler expected happened. Aside from a few American isolationists who tried to persuade President Roosevelt to mediate a peace, and aside from a few fascists in England who held small demonstrations and a few defeatists in France who had not

wanted to die for Danzig in the first place—and did not want to fight for France now—nothing changed.

The peace offer was rejected.

This put von Brauchitsch in a tough spot. He did the most logical thing under the circumstances—nothing.

If he and the other generals had wanted the war, the logical thing would have been to attack France immediately after the defeat of Poland. The Germans were certainly better prepared than the French or the British. Whatever they could accomplish later on could certainly be accomplished more easily at once. The fact that nothing happened is a further proof that the generals did not want anything to happen. They let the months from October to May pass—advantageously for the Allies. They sat in Germany and had no clear conception of what should be done. One axiom ruled all their thoughts. That axiom was that the Maginot Line was impregnable. Therefore, war with France was impossible.

We can only guess that the generals explained this to Hitler often and unequivocally. Naturally, we cannot say what might have happened if the axiom of the impregnability of the Maginot Line had not suddenly been broken down. The day that happened marked an enormous victory on the part of Hitler over his generals. That day was February 17, 1940.

The irony of world history once more served Hitler well. The Russians had intervened in the war not, as all the world believed, to attack an "innocent little country" but in order to protect themselves against Hitler. The Russians did protect themselves, and thereby gave Hitler one of his trump cards.

It is impossible to understand the Russo-Finnish war without studying the role Finland had played before the war began. The political strength of the little country in the north rested on the fact that it could align itself for or against Germany and for or against Russia. Germany had the better connections in Finland; that is, the German military clique had better connections with Baron Mannerheim and the Finnish military group. Finland's "war of liberation" after World War I had

been waged with the aid of the German military clique, and the result of that war had been a highly questionable liberation, for Baron Mannerheim had delivered his country body and soul to the German army of occupation under General von der Goltz. Since that time the relations of Baron Mannerheim and the German generals had been extremely close.

There has already been mentioned a memorandum that the General Staff sent to the Foreign Office in 1932, a year before Hitler took power. In that memorandum the General Staff had explained that the prerequisites for any war were alliances with Finland and Rumania—to keep Russia neutral by threatening her northern and southern flanks. After Hitler came to power, no official alliance with Finland was concluded, but the General Staffs of the two countries worked together intimately. Among other things, the Finns took over a large part of the German military espionage against Russia. The Russians found this out when they succeeded in arresting Finnish Lieutenant Pentekainen, one of the heads of the espionage organization, and wringing a confession out of him. Probably the Russians had known long before how things stood, but now they kept an even closer watch on the negotiations between the Chief of the Finnish General Staff, Karl Ostermann, and certain officers of the German General Staff.

The Russians could not help reasoning that a German campaign against Russia was being prepared, with Finland as a base. There was no other explanation for the co-operation of the two General Staffs. Naturally, the Russians could not take any risks; they could not afford to hope that these plans would remain on paper because the German generals did not want a war with Russia. It was safer and more sensible for Russia to anticipate Hitler.

For that reason, on November 30, 1939, they attacked Finland. The first two months of that war proved that von Brauchitsch and the other German generals were right: even the unquestionably superior Red Army could not break through the Mannerheim Line. If the Mannerheim Line could not be

broken, how senseless it would be to run their heads up against the Maginot Line.

But the Mannerheim Line was broken after all. It was broken on February 17, 1940. This was achieved by a tank maneuver of the Russian, General Stern, who employed small tanks which raced through the line, that is, through the relatively small spaces between the forts. And on March 7 the Finnish peace negotiators were in Moscow.

After February 17 the generals could no longer tell Hitler that a war against France would come to a standstill against the Maginot Line. They could not *tell* him this, at any rate. For of course it still did not change their belief that the German Army was unprepared for an all-out, long war.

Hitler did not undertake a war at first. He undertook another campaign, one in which the Army would be used only in small sections; the Air Force and the Navy had a very decisive part to play, too. The invasion of Denmark and Norway, beginning on April 9, 1940, was his answer to the Russian move in Finland.

Strategically, having the Russians in Finland meant that the Russian right wing extended beyond the German left wing. That is, Germany was in danger of encirclement. The objection may be made that practically there was little chance of that becoming a real danger. But that is no argument to strategists. Certainly not to German strategists, whose fixed idea is the importance of the wings (Cannae). The occupation of Norway was, moreover, not only an answer to this threat. It meant the separation of Russia from England and, at least theoretically, a threat to both. In respect to England, especially where air warfare was considered, this threat was more than theoretical. In respect to Russia, the Skagerrak was a kind of northern Gibraltar.

### 3

Hitler believed a war in the West against France would not be a serious war; it would merely be another campaign.

For Hitler knew more than his military leaders; more, even,



than the military attaché to the German Embassy in Paris. There is a story about Hitler's conversation with his military attaché in 1938. The attaché had assured him that the French Army was unbeatable, and when Hitler only smiled ironically, the attaché offered his resignation.

Hitler had really known more than that military expert. Hitler knew more than his generals. There seems to be no doubt that the Fuehrer did not tell his generals much about the political end of his war preparation. He told them nothing about how his agents were collaborating with the appeasers in England and France. They could not dream the extent of treachery on the enemy's side that had been prepared for and even already committed. Only one of the generals knew about this diplomatic protection of the flanks, or shall we say this flank guard of fifth columnists which Hitler reckoned with in his plans. It is significant that of all his generals only Franz Halder knew about these things, for Franz Halder was the only one who agreed completely with Hitler in the employment of these methods—any methods. The other generals would have been alienated and shocked, as they were about the bombing of Warsaw. Moreover, they would not have believed Hitler; they did not have enough imagination.

The only thing Hitler could do, therefore, was to give them an altogether general guarantee. This he did. It was a guarantee such as he had given them about the Rhineland adventure. We have no way of knowing whether Herr von Brauchitsch got Hitler to sign on the dotted line, as Ludwig Beck had done; whether Hitler promised to resign if the coup in the West failed. However, Brauchitsch's mediocrity of character and intelligence militates against this possibility.

And after all by that time the generals were already in a position that left them no choice. Hitler had not kept his promise to localize the Polish campaign. The promised peace had not been achieved. So they could do nothing but trust his promise that this time, too, it would be only a campaign.

As it later turned out, the moment of the attack on France

was to prove fatal for Germany. In spite of a blitz victory on a heretofore unimagined scale—and to some extent because of it—the German General Staff found itself in a perilous situation. They had to attack England without being prepared for such an attack. If, as the General Staff had planned, a short, isolated campaign against France could have been launched in 1942, then perhaps the Germans would have been able to plunge ahead immediately into the matter of invading England, and England would probably have been just as unprepared even then.

But in the spring of 1940 only a few men within the German General Staff could perceive the intricate causal connection between victory and defeat.

#### 4

The war that began in the West in the spring of 1940 cannot be comprehended on a strategic basis alone. From any orthodox conception of the struggle of armies against armies, it is inexplicable. Never before had a struggle between nations turned out to be so much an internal political struggle, in fact, a class struggle. For the so-called fifth column was formed principally, not by Hitler's agents, but by the politicians and members of the ruling classes in the countries that were warring against him. By men whose own interests suggested, or seemed to suggest, that they support Hitler. We cannot ascertain here what sprung from stupidity and egotism and what from unadulterated treason, in the actions and ideas of Chamberlain, Daladier, and the others. The fact remains that the war, until the collapse of France and until Churchill took the reins, was nothing more than a continuation of the policies of Munich.

It seems like a kind of divine justice that not only the German generals but also the Chamberlains, Daladiers, and the rest were deceived deceivers. Both groups had in common the desire not to fight a real war. Both had Hitler's promise. Chamberlain and Daladier were quite willing to conclude peace after Poland fell and to allow Hitler a free hand in the Balkans. But since,

as we have seen, Hitler did not really want peace, he offered conditions they simply could not accept. Could not accept, primarily because their peoples simply would not stand for it, because public opinion, as Chamberlain readily admitted, would not stand for it.

The only solution for these statesmen was, therefore, a symbolic declaration of war. And for all practical purposes they continued to wage it symbolically.

A large number of the generals of the Allied group simply sabotaged the war. No munitions were sent to the front, no aviators appeared at the front, entire divisions—contrary to orders—were not thrown into the battle, bridges were not blown up.... Naturally, this was not the case everywhere; in many places there was real, sincere fighting; there were some men on the French General Staff who really wanted to fight.

In fact, the situation was so confused and the question of whether the French were actually going to fight the war or not was so hard to answer that Mussolini could not make up his mind whether or not to go to war. Since he did not want to fight an actual war, but merely to share in the spoils, he hesitated until June 10, in spite of the extremely detailed reports of the Italian military attaché in Paris. By then he must have decided that the great majority of the French military leaders had declared themselves; that they preferred Adolf Hitler to Leon Blum.

## 5

The strategy of the Western War was defined—had in fact been defined for twenty years—by the existence of the Maginot Line. Since the Line continued north of Sedan, and along the Belgian-German frontier as the Dyle Line, there was only one country left from which to launch an offensive which promised immediate success: Holland. Therefore, it had been an axiom with the German General Staff in regard to the plans for a Western War: whoever is first in Holland will win the war.

The Germans were first in Holland.

On May 10, 1940, at 5:35 A.M. two German armies invaded Holland. At the same time, the airports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam were practically in the hands of the Germans. It was the first successful appearance of parachutists. In Rotterdam they were aided by a German battery which suddenly started shooting from the harbor. It had been smuggled in during the night on a German freighter.

The general confusion and panic made it possible for the parachutists to hold out for a few days. That was enough. For, a few days later, the German armies were in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The Dutch had no airports from which they could have sent planes to retard the German progress. Their courageous army was much too small.

On May 14, Holland capitulated. It was a military "push-over" for the Germans, except for the cruelty with which the civilians were treated, the wholesale murder, which again shocked the German generals.

Germany had concentrated about two million men at the Dutch-Belgian frontier; seventy to eighty divisions in the first line, thirty to forty divisions in reserve. There were two army groups. The northern group, under General von Busch, consisted of two armies under von Bock and von Kluge. After conquering Holland in five days, these armies now continued along the North Sea in a southwest direction. Its right flank—that is, the right flank of the entire armed forces of Germany, under von Bock—marched toward Antwerp.

The other army group, the one to the south, was under the command of von Rundstedt. It consisted of three armies which, going from the north to the south, were commanded by Generals List, von Reichenau, and von Kleist. List had to approach Maastricht across the Meuse and then proceed along the northern bank of the Meuse toward Namur. Von Reichenau was supposed to march south of the Meuse toward Dinant. Von Kleist had to march in the direction of Sedan.

On May 10, exactly one hour after the Germans had crossed the Dutch-Belgian frontier, the Allied troops started to move.

They executed the so-called "Maneuver Dyle," as it was called in French General Staff plans. That is, the British Expeditionary Force and the French 1st and 7th Armies reinforced the Belgians in the Dyle Line (the second line of Belgian defense stretching from Antwerp to Namur). According to Allied Staff plans this second line of Belgian defense—much stronger than the first one, the Albert Line (along the Albert Channel to Maastricht)—was to be held at any cost.

Next to the coast, that is, next to their base and to their lines of communications, the English were posted, thereby forming the left Allied wing. Thus they stood opposite the army groups of von Busch. Then, south of Antwerp, came Belgians, next, at Namur, the two French armies.

Farther to the south, there was nothing at all. Here was the hole in the system of the Allied fortifications. The Belgian Dyle line stopped at Namur. The French Maginot Line started at Montmédy. In between, there were fifty miles. Naturally, it was these fifty miles which hypnotized the German General Staff. A break-through had to take place here. That meant that the army which was to attack here had the most important task. It was the most southern army of the Rundstedt group, under von Kleist. It was entirely motorized. It had a great number of tanks and motorized infantry. The commander of the tank groups was General Guderian; leader of one group was General Erwin Rommel.

The strategic goal of a break-through there—near Sedan—was threefold:

1. It would bring German troops into the rear of the Maginot Line and thereby wipe out its value.
2. If those troops turned to the north, they would arrive at the rear of the Dyle Line, which meant that the British Expeditionary Force, the two French armies, and the Belgians were in a pocket.
3. It would separate the French armies, operating north of the Aisne and Somme, from the rest of the country. The French had some of their best troops there in the north.

The break-through itself was a very difficult feat. Most of the fifty-mile zone was covered with the wooded Ardennes Mountains, one of the last natural forests in Europe. Thick underbrush, hills, gorges, and passes made passage a slow enterprise which could easily be disastrous if the other side covered this particular spot from the air. The French General Staff thought that a passage was next to impossible. Anyhow, they didn't believe that operations on a large scale, with motorized divisions, would be possible. Evidently they did not know that the German General Staff believed insurmountable difficulties so far as terrain went never existed.

Anyhow, the French had their 9th Army under General Corap stationed near Sedan; it was supposed to occupy the left bank of the Meuse from Namur to Sedan, if and when the Germans tried to break through. Then, from Sedan to Montmédy there was a second army under Huntziger, and in the Ardennes there was a regular Belgian garrison occupied by the Chasseurs d'Ardennes.

But the French General Staff figured that the very least the Germans would need to get through was five days. In that time they thought they could occupy the Namur-Sedan line. They hoped, however, that they would have seven days. Why it was necessary to have seven days or even five for the manning of a front fifty miles long will always remain a secret with the French General Staff.

As it was, the Germans did not need seven days to break through, not even five. Already on May 13 they appeared at several points north and south of Sedan, after having crossed the Meuse. The 9th French Army was almost completely destroyed during the next few days. On May 15 it was not in existence any more.

The break-through had succeeded.

In the meantime the army group of von Busch and the right (most northern) wing of the Rundstedt army group (under List) had taken the first Belgian line of defense, the Albert Line, without much difficulty. Some of the Flemish troops there,

infested by German fifth columnists, went over to the enemy, their bands playing. On May 15, the day of the break-through at Sedan, those northern armies were facing the Dyle Line, Antwerp-Namur. The Belgians who were still east of this line had capitulated though the line itself held for some time. On May 20 a German break-through was achieved at the southern wing of the Dyle Line, where the 1st French Army was posted.

At that time, the tank corps under Guderian and Rommel, having achieved the break-through at Sedan, had already turned north; they were back of the Dyle Line and on their way to the Channel coast. On May 21 they took Abbeville.

The motorized corps, aided by bombers, were followed by infantry. French infantry, fighting courageously, tried to stop the progress, but were lost since they had not enough tanks and no coverage from the air at all.

While most of the army group of Rundstedt by this time was pushing north to the coast, the army group of von Busch pushed to the west. When the Dyle Line was almost completely surrounded, it had to be abandoned. On May 21, indeed, not only almost the whole of Belgium, but all northern France down to the Somme was in the hands of the Germans. The Allied armies were caught in a pocket six hundred miles square. After vain attempts to escape from the pocket—in which the British tank troops did some admirable fighting—the British Expeditionary Forces received the order to retire and to embark at Dunkirk. That was on May 25.

On May 27 King Leopold of Belgium capitulated. That meant there was a hole between the right wing of the English and the 1st French Army, and that the right wing of the English was exposed; but the Germans did not try to profit from this situation.

Then followed the evacuation of Dunkirk between May 29 and June 2. It was a tactical achievement of the first order. It was also the first decisive victory of the RAF over the Luftwaffe.

Now, all Germany had to do was to liquidate France and the

French Army. German motorized columns were sent along the coast to cut it off from the sea. Though there were very few men in those tanks or even on motorcycles, no resistance was attempted.

The French Army had taken a stand east and northeast of Paris. But the morale was low. Everybody felt that "only a miracle can save France." And just then the French had no faith in miracles.

On June 12 there was still a front north of Montmédy. But it could not resist the German attacks for long.

By this time German troops were already in the Maginot Line. Since Montmédy had not yet been surrounded, it never became quite clear how they got there. Probably they just moved in, because nobody was left there.

On June 12, too, Paris was declared an open city. On June 13 German troops entered the city.

Marshal Weygand ordered the retreat behind the Loire. The retreat at the beginning was well executed and since by far the greater part of the French Army was still intact, the resistance could have been reorganized. But Marshal Pétain did not want to go on fighting. On June 16 he asked for an armistice.

When Hitler learned about it, he leaped into the air with joy. He jumped, clicking his heels in the fashion of a ballet dancer. He clapped his hands with pleasure.

An astonished world saw this astonishing performance a few days later in the newsreels.

## 6

On June 21 the French were informed that the armistice conditions would be handed to them in the Forest of Compiègne.

Why Compiègne? Because here, near the little town of Compiègne, some fifty miles northeast of Paris, the armistice after World War I had been concluded. On November 10, 1918, the choice of place had been accidental. This time it was not.

The Germans wanted everything the same as it had been



before. The famous special car that Marshal Foch had used, in which the Armistice of 1918 had been signed, was hauled out of the museum in which it stood. It was placed on the exact spot where it had stood in 1918. At three in the afternoon Hitler's special train arrived and the Fuehrer got out, accompanied by Goering, Keitel, Brauchitsch, Admiral Raeder, Rudolf Hess, and a number of others. The Germans entered Foch's car and took their seats at a horseshoe-shaped table. Then the French Delegation was sent for.

The French Delegation consisted of four men, led by General Huntziger. The French were housed in tents equipped with telephone and telegraph lines, not far from the town of Rethondes. When they entered the car, the Germans stood up and greeted them with outstretched right hands. The French replied with military salutes.

Then General Keitel stood up. He read a statement declaring that now the greatest humiliation of all times, the Armistice of 1918, was therewith being wiped out. He made a number of slighting remarks about President Wilson, paid tribute to the "heroic resistance" of the French, and sat down again.

This was the greatest moment in General Keitel's life.

Then the armistice conditions were handed over to the French. Hitler's interpreter, Schmidt, translated them. Keitel rose once more for a final address in which he paid homage to the memory of the fallen German and French soldiers.

Then Hitler and his entourage left the scene of their triumph. The Fuehrer entered Paris on June 24.

Old Hindenburg had been right after all. Hitler was still no more than a Bohemian Corporal. Aside from the stupid and insensitive Keitel, most of the generals were painfully embarrassed. It was naïve and lacking in taste to reproduce the externals of a ceremony in the belief that such an act could wipe out what was now history. To their minds it was naïve and tasteless of Hitler to send Foch's special car to Germany and have it exhibited there. And to order everything in the Forest of Compiègne that was reminiscent of the first armistice nego-

tiations to be blown up—a granite block with an inscription, the hall in which the railroad car had been kept. And before reporters and newsreel photographers at that.

But perhaps the generals were wrong and Hitler right. Perhaps history could be wiped out by being repeated. Wiped out now were the memories of Count Moltke who, in 1871, also had been in Versailles and in Paris as the conqueror. He had contented himself with visiting museums, with taking in the sights. Those who came in 1940 bought up everything in the Parisian stores, left worthless money printed for the purpose or didn't leave any money at all. They carried away the food that belonged to the French people. They broke into the famous wine cellars of old châteaux and enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

That was only the beginning.

The farce at Compiègne was only the beginning. It was followed by more cruel things than the deeds of the German officers who plundered Paris and indeed the whole of France. It was followed by General Otto von Stuepnagel's appointment as Commander of the German Occupation Army in France.

Otto von Stuepnagel had been a major in World War I. In Belgium he had committed countless crimes against the civilian population and had ultimately been included on that list of officers who under the Versailles Treaty were supposed to be turned over to the Allies for punishment.

Like the others on the list, Otto von Stuepnagel was not turned over to the Allies. But he did not forget. Shortly after the end of the war he founded a league of former German officers whose aim was to draw up a list of Allied officers who, in the opinion of Stuepnagel and his friends, had committed shameful crimes, especially murder. The league demanded seriously that these Allied officers be turned over to an International Court presided over by Germany—and convicted.

Herr von Stuepnagel did not forget. As the military governor of Paris after the Armistice of 1940 he had ample opportunity to show that he was not as barbarous as the Allied list claimed. He offered the proof. He proved that he would not

stop at an occasional murder. Herr von Stuelpnagel was, in fact, the man who ordered wholesale slaughter of civilian hostages. He proved to his friends, the generals, that one could come from a good, ancient family and still do exactly the things that got on the nerves of scions of good, ancient families when men like Himmler and Heydrich did them.

He also proved that life's repetitions are often naïve and tasteless—and cruel.

## 7

France was beaten to her knees. Germany was greater than ever. From Norway to the Pyrenees there was none to resist her. The British Army had lost almost its entire equipment; it seemed to be only a question of days before the undefended British Isles would be invaded. Tremendous quantities of money, raw materials, food, and forced labor were at the disposal of Germany.

Germany was great. The generals were great.

In his triumphal speech before the German Reichstag on July 20, 1940, Hitler allowed no doubt of this. He promoted almost all of them, he gave them new decorations. Goering, who already held the highest possible title of Field Marshal, became Marshal of the Reich—a rank that was especially created for him. Twelve Army and Air Force generals became Field Marshals, among them von Brauchitsch, von Rundstedt, von Leeb, von Bock, List, von Reichenau, and Keitel.

In that speech of July 20 Hitler even went into military details and praised the great feats of his generals. Perhaps he praised them a little too much. Perhaps he had twinges of conscience for having forced them into a war they did not want.

For, in the last analysis, the achievement had not been so great. General List, for example, who had commanded the most northern of Rundstedt's armies, had quite overlooked the fact that the Belgian capitulation had uncovered the British right flank; he neglected to advance into the gap. Kleist had

operated successfully, but with incredible daring; if real resistance had been offered during the break-through he might easily have been in a perilous position.

In fact, the entire campaign was risky because the movements of the different armies were unco-ordinated. In the middle of May, after the break-through at Sedan, there had been a moment when Rundstedt's entire army was encircled. If there had been any real fighting spirit, any real enterprise, on the part of the Allies, he could have been annihilated.

Was this the fault of General Staff Chief Franz Halder? Perhaps. That at any rate would explain the fact that after the campaign Halder was promoted only to Colonel General, at a time when many younger and less important men became Field Marshals.

Among the generals there was a good deal of speculation about these things. Halder was watched carefully at a great banquet given by Goering for the new Field Marshals and at which Hitler was present. Everyone expected Halder to be in ill humor. But he seemed to be very cheerful and loquacious.

There were other people, equally well informed, who had an explanation that came to exactly the opposite conclusion. They agreed that the operations plan had made a crucial mistake, which after the break-through at Sedan could have resulted in a German debacle. But according to these sources, the plan had provided for enough co-ordination between the separate armies to eliminate such a danger. That was Halder's R Plan; or better, the plan of General Hans von Wietersheim, Chief of the Operations Department, who had been hailed years before as a "second Ludendorff."

Then something had happened which probably had never happened before in the history of the Operations Department or the General Staff. Hitler had intervened personally and had demanded certain changes in the plan in order to gain time. Wietersheim had protested vigorously. Finally the dispute had reached such a pitch that the Chief of Staff told the Fuehrer to his face that his plans were those of a dilettante. In any case,

Hitler and Wietersheim virtually stopped talking to each other and communicated through Hitler's personal favorite, General Alfred Jodl.

Whatever the truth, the Chief of the General Staff was sitting in no bed of roses.

Fundamentally, there was only one real victor: Hitler himself. The generals did become Field Marshals, but that meant little to the people; Dr. Goebbels saw to that. The generals had won a war but they were not Hindenburgs by any means. Hitler did not want any Hindenburgs around him.

Of them all, only one man came before the spotlight of publicity; only one man became more than a title and a few decorations to the masses of the German people. He became more or less the romantic figure of this war. Romantic in spite of the fact that he was a tank specialist. This man was Erwin Rommel.

One of his officers, a Lieutenant Tschimpke, wrote of him and his crossing of the Meuse at Dinant (in the book, *The Phantom Division*):

"...In the midst of this infernal noise, in the midst of these streaks of smoke that ever and again flared uncannily blood-red from the fire at the mouths of cannon and the explosions of striking shells—at the very decisive moment in this desperate situation, the figure of the general, the commander of the armored division, suddenly appeared on the bank of the Meuse. Leaping and crawling over fences and bushes and in the shelter of shattered houses he squirmed up to the new span that the pioneers had built under cover of darkness. 'We can't go on,' the pioneers said to the general.... The general was not dismayed. The word 'impossible' does not exist for him. Not for a second did he hesitate.... The German sharpshooters lay in the midst of a rain of bullets. Beside them, his head pressed like theirs against the ground, lay the general. He knows all this; it leaves him cold, does not divert him from his goal.... He speaks only a single word: 'Tanks!' Under protection of the smoke they wind up, going into position behind the banks of the river...."

The newspapers described in thrilling detail how Rommel's divisions captured twenty-three generals and over thirty thousand French soldiers. How Rommel himself rode in the lead in Tank No. 711, how he always led the battle and always chose this tank.

The newspapers described how Rommel advanced on the road from Amiens to Abbeville. Six hundred tanks. . . . They encountered distant artillery fire. What was to be done? The orthodox maneuver would have been to disperse the tanks as far apart as possible. That would have meant greater safety but loss of time. Rommel took the risk. He kept the column together, thereby surprising the enemy, who never dreamed he would be so "foolish" as to leave hundreds of unprotected, uncamouflaged tanks on the open road. Thus the coup succeeded; the enemy did nothing and Rommel did not lose precious time, and was in Abbeville on May 21—ahead of schedule. Indeed, during the whole French campaign, Rommel and his tanks did not once leave the road, neither for the approach march, nor for the deployment, nor for the attack.

Experts who knew something about the technique of warfare considered this behavior exceedingly risky, but the people, of course, were impressed by it. With great enthusiasm they recounted what Erwin Rommel had said to his officers when he took over his command: "Gentlemen, don't think I'm crazy. Trust me. To the right there is nothing, to the left there is nothing, backward there is nothing—but in front there is Rommel!"

Rommel became a legend. In the first World War he had distinguished himself; in 1917 he had received the highest German decoration, the *Pour le Mérite*; twenty-three days before the Armistice he was promoted to captain.

Then came the fictional part of the story. He had met Hitler early, been an SA leader, then an SS leader, fought Hitler's fight and had not returned to the Army until Hitler took power.

Not a word of all that was true. Rommel had never left the

Army and had never been a member of the SA or the SS. He had *not* met Hitler in the early days and certainly had *not* been interested in Nazism. On the other hand, he had been extraordinarily interested in tanks and from 1928 on, first in Breslau and then in Dresden, he had trained tank officers under List. When World War II began he was only a colonel, but the Fuehrer had quickly made him a general.

The generals had to admit that although he took great risks, Rommel knew his business. They disliked things spectacular, and the qualities that displeased them in Hitler also displeased them in Rommel. But in contrast to the Fuehrer, the young general impressed them. They told one another he was a man one could talk to.

In fact, he almost—though not quite—belonged.

## 8

Aside from questions of tact and certain externals that the generals did not like about Hitler, they had cause to be well pleased in the summer of 1940. They had attained more than they had hoped, and had attained it more quickly. Looking back now, it seemed that their idea of the campaign they could risk and the war they could not risk had not been altogether correct. It had, at any rate, been overly cautious. Hitler had predicted they would win and would win quickly—and Hitler had been right. It had been almost a parade.

Still, they were not altogether content. Something disturbed them, though it was something they could not put their finger on. Germany was great, Germany was the victor. But just what could they do with their victory? Countries had been conquered and occupied, but the war was not over yet. In wars, as the generals understood them, there was a victory and then there was peace. But things didn't work out that way with Hitler.

The German generals did not understand all the complicated circumstances. They did not see why Hitler could not use his great successes until he could apply his new standards, especially

his new economic standards, to the entire world. They saw only that the more conquests they made, the smaller grew the likelihood of peace.

This was a strange war, in which success, even decisive success, did not get you anywhere.

The general who perhaps thought more than his comrades along these lines, and was therefore more puzzled and perhaps even frightened, was Hans von Wietersheim. Indeed, the fact that you could win battle after battle and still not get anywhere unnerved him and became almost an obsession.

This man whom a few called the second Ludendorff and whom Fritsch had appointed to the key position of the General Staff did not look like most of the other generals. In fact, he looked like neither a general nor a German. Although he came from a Bavarian family, he might have been taken for a Russian. He had dark hair that he liked to wear a little too long; a dark mustache that by no means concealed his soft, irresolute mouth; dark, melancholy eyes, and a sad, dreamy expression to match. To look at him you could hardly believe that he was the man who prepared the minutely detailed plans for German deployments; that it was he who with a stroke of the pen could send thousands of tanks and millions of men moving over hundreds of miles of territory. You would not imagine he could think in military terms at all. He looked more like a man who would see a forest as a forest, not as cover; a river as sparkling water, not as a place where a bridge must be built; men as men, not as divisions and armies.

As a matter of fact Hans von Wietersheim himself had once seemed to doubt that he had any sense for reality in the military sense. For he had tried at one time to leave this office in which the world became one vast deployment plan, leave it at least temporarily.

After the annexation of Austria he had had himself transferred temporarily to an Austrian Military District. But he soon returned to his office in the Bendlerstrasse. He never spoke of this brief excursion into active military life. Something had



happened then that he didn't want to talk about. Perhaps it had happened within himself. Perhaps he had realized that he was not made for the reality of soldiering. Perhaps his return to the General Staff and his preoccupation with plans and ciphers and abstract relationships was an inward escape. It seemed to have the character of an escape, for his preoccupation became more and more fanatic; more and more often he remained in his office all through the night. Perhaps this preoccupation was the only way he could compensate for a reality—in the military sense—that he did not feel up to.

Hans von Wietersheim had one great passion: Napoleon I.

The Napoleon cult had become a steady fixture among the younger officers. In the cadet school in Lichterfelde the hat and the sword of Napoleon were put on display, and they used to make an enormous impression on the boys of ten and twelve years. All their romantic longing identified itself with the French emperor. Those men who from their first youth were drilled to suppress their own feelings, to act inconspicuously, to live according to tradition and forms long ago established, who tried to look exactly as all the others looked, and to speak and to move exactly as all of them spoke and moved—they had one great ideal—it may be right to say forbidden ideal, which gave color to their otherwise routine and gray lives. They carried the picture of one artillery officer who had made a fantastic career, who had become the emperor of a great nation, who had dominated Europe, who had become almost a myth. A man whom the world, even today, lauded as the great liberator, as an agent of humanity, of whom poets sang.

And all this because—in the last analysis—he had been the best artillery officer of his time.

Napoleon had not become a romantic figure after his death. He had been one during his lifetime. He not only was able to enchant peoples, he was able to enchant soldiers. He not only had ideas; he could command, too. His soldiers not only obeyed him, they had utter confidence in him. They literally went

through fire for him. And this was not achieved by propaganda tricks, but because they knew he was one of them.

Most German officers talked about Frederick the Great as their ideal, but deep down in their hearts it had always been Napoleon. And it was exactly for this reason that Schlieffen, who understood the implications of such hero worship and the dangers of an imitation of Napoleon, "rediscovered" Frederick the Great.

What you could say of many German officers, you could say twice and thrice of Hans von Wietersheim when it came to Napoleon. Napoleon was his model. But then, perhaps the word model is not quite correct. Wietersheim was far more critical of Napoleon than most of the other officers. There was far more passion in his interest than in theirs. It was a passion close to jealousy, a combination of love and hatred.

Perhaps it was this cult, this passion for Napoleon which made him think now—after the French campaign was over—more and more of England. England which had not made peace with Napoleon, when Napoleon had conquered the whole continent, England which had been finally the downfall of Napoleon.

A great victory had been won. France was beaten to her knees. But Wietersheim was not happy. It was a strange war for him.

It was a strange war, too, for one of the generals who really did not belong and yet who now was beginning to belong: Hermann Goering.

Hermann Goering had just received a new title that had been created for him, and it seemed he was now greater than ever. Justly so. The Luftwaffe had proved itself splendidly in Poland. It had even come off well against the British Navy, in Norwegian waters. It had distinguished itself in the Netherlands and in Belgium and France. You might argue questions of taste all you liked, you might agree with the generals that in war, defenseless cities were not bombed nor were refugees on the roads machine-gunned from the air. But if you took the

view that this was the prime task of the Air Force—to create terror among the enemy—then the Luftwaffe had done well. And undoubtedly Goering deserved the credit for this.

When in 1934 he convinced Hitler that an air force was cheaper to build than a fleet and could do a better job, his ideas were substantially in agreement with those generals who wanted a campaign but no war. Goering thought that the mere presence of the Air Force and its occasional employment in impressive quantity over a limited territory for a limited period of time would have a decisive effect on the enemy or on those who intended to become enemies. In this sense and for this purpose the Luftwaffe was built up. It was, therefore, not built for the long pull, but for sudden, lightning-like strokes.

Poland was the confirmation of Goering's idea, and the following campaigns served even more to confirm it.

The destruction of the French Air Force on its airfields between May 10 and May 13 was, however, the last decisive victory of the Luftwaffe. Its first defeat came a few weeks later over Dunkirk. The fact that a British air fleet succeeded in covering the evacuation across the Channel *was* definitely a defeat for the Luftwaffe.

The next defeat was the failure of the great bombings of England in August and September. At the end of September Goering flew over England in a well-protected observation plane and saw the terrible effects of the bombing of London. On his return he reported to Hitler that the war was over, that England was downed for good. But he must have known even then that this was untrue. And Hitler knew it, too. He knew it all the more because he had already given up trusting Goering implicitly. At this time he had much more faith in another man in the Luftwaffe, a man who because of Hitler's trust, and of his own great abilities, advanced steadily during the following months and years and thereby steadily forced Goering into the background.

This was Goering's predicament only a few months after a new title had been invented for him. As a matter of fact, on the

very day Goering was promoted, Hitler had also promoted the other man. On that day Albert Kesselring was one of the many men who became a Field Marshal.

Albert Kesselring was past fifty at that time. He had succeeded the first Chief of Staff of the Luftwaffe, Lieutenant General Wever, who had been a creature of Fritsch's and who had died in an airplane crash in 1936. Kesselring immediately declared himself in favor of the new operative and tactical principle of mass air attacks. He was the real creator of what later became known as the "rolling attack." His fundamental idea was to base operations not on individual fliers but on co-operating squadrons. He tried it out at once, in the Spanish Civil War.

At first his idea met with strong resistance. The old fliers did not want to give up their individual dash and daring in favor of anonymous formations. Kesselring had to retire from his General Staff post. The reorganization in February, 1938—after Fritsch's removal and the establishment of full independence and equality for the Air Force—brought Kesselring once more to the fore. He was given command of the most important Luftwaffe district, that of Berlin. From then on he rose swiftly, a proof that Goering, and probably Hitler also, had accepted his idea of mass air warfare.

In a sense, the success in Poland and later in Holland was therefore more Kesselring's than Goering's; and the defeat at Dunkirk was particularly discouraging for him, since he was beaten with his own weapon. For here the British improvised on what they had learned from the hopeless air battles of the past weeks. For the first time they organized collective action—and with considerable success.

Goering and Kesselring were acquainted with each other from the last World War, when they had both been young aviators. Later, too, their careers ran oddly parallel. Kesselring, like Goering, became a drug addict and spent two years in a sanatorium in Bavaria. The two were friendly for a long time and undoubtedly it was Goering who helped Kesselring's swift career in the Luftwaffe—or rather, his two careers. But toward the end

of 1939, when Goering noticed that Hitler was interested in Kesselring, he was by no means pleased. During the Polish and Dutch campaigns he tried to push Kesselring into the background, but it was too late. Hitler himself wanted Kesselring to command the action of the Air Force over Holland. He thought a good deal of Kesselring and once called him the "master strategist of the air." This was doubtless intended as a left-handed slap at Goering.

Perhaps Hitler had another reason for preferring Kesselring and letting Goering know that he was no longer very pleased with him. Perhaps he had noticed that a strange transformation had come over his once so faithful friend. Goering, who had entered the generals' clique as an outsider, had changed with the years. As he won higher and higher titles, he had become more a general than a Nazi. Goering's intervention at the Court of Honor in which von Fritsch was tried, when he had crossed up the Gestapo, might have been spontaneous. But then again, it might not. Such incidents must have given Hitler food for thought.

At the time, in the summer of 1940, most observers were not sure just what Hitler was thinking. A year later it could no longer be concealed from anyone what he thought of the man he had chosen as his successor and how little he trusted him.

## SOMETHING IS ROTTEN

### I

EVERYTHING was achieved and nothing was achieved in the summer of 1940. Every day and every night the planes of the Luftwaffe flew over England, and England showed no sign of surrendering. As far as the generals were concerned, all was peaceful. They had not enough to do, with the exception of big fat General Dollmann, who was "somewhere" in the north of France, drilling Austrian troops—obviously for the purpose of invading England. General Hermann Dollmann was not at all peaceful. On the one hand he cursed the Austrian troops, which he considered inadequate, and on the other hand he cursed his old friend von Brauchitsch. For Dollmann declared on every possible occasion that his old friend von Brauchitsch had no clear conception of how to run this invasion business. But Dollmann was unjust, for Brauchitsch was not alone in his confusion.

And it certainly did not improve Adolf Hitler's state of mind to know that the Chief of the Operations Department, General von Wietersheim, was telling everybody on the General Staff that he had always been for forgetting about Paris and for trying to invade England immediately after Dunkirk.

It was during this summer of 1940 that Hitler insisted that Brauchitsch get rid of his Chief of the Operations Department. Brauchitsch declined firmly. Apparently he felt that Wietersheim's services could not be dispensed with, at least not just then.

Meanwhile, many plans were worked out in the General Staff, and many plans were rejected. All of them had something to do with the Mediterranean. In the General Staff as

well as among the commanding generals there were a good many men whose minds were set on the Mediterranean. In fact, since the generals had accepted the idea of having the Italians as allies—and it was not easy for the German generals to swallow this—they had tried to include the Italian sphere in the plans of the German General Staff.

Quite separate from all Mediterranean plans, there was also the question of the Balkans. For Germany the Balkans were vital producers of raw materials that the war machine needed. Even the generals understood this. And the Balkans were needed for purely economic reasons—now, later, always.

Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia had at that time been brought under German influence more or less “peacefully.” At first Germany sent technicians, specialists, buyers, and economic organizers. Then instruction troops were sent into a country. Finally, an army was mobilized on the border. Up to now there had been very few serious difficulties, largely because the peaceful conquest of the Balkans had been undertaken slowly, carefully, and often even tactfully. Hitler had done this not so much out of fear that the Balkan countries would defend themselves but rather in order to keep the Great Powers (which still were intact at that time) from realizing that their vital interests were being threatened.

This undertaking became considerably more difficult by the fact that one of the Great Powers was the Soviet Union. And Soviet Russia was not so easily lulled to sleep as England and France had been before the outbreak of the war. The closer Hitler moved to the Dardanelles, the more dangerous the situation inevitably became. When in March, 1941, Bulgaria entered the Axis, the Soviet Union accepted it as a *fait accompli*, but showed resentment. Russia’s attitude was clear; she would not give up her old vital interest in the Straits without a fight.

Hitler and his General Staff had worked out a plan which would enable the Germans to obtain the Caucasian oil fields before the Russians could lift a finger. If this had been successful, a concentrated attack on Russia—from the northwest, the

west and the south, that is, from the Caucasus—probably would have followed. But as things stood in the spring of 1941, Hitler had many reasons for avoiding a conflict with the Soviet Union.

Since October, 1940, Greece had been at war with Italy. In spite of their sudden attack the Italians had won no significant advantages and in the beginning of 1941 were clearly on the defensive. The German generals looked on with a good deal of amusement and malicious pleasure. Although the Italians were their allies, their sympathies as sportsmen were definitely on the side of the Greeks. All the more so since the Greek General, Metaxas, who was making life so miserable for the Italians, had been a student at the Military Academy in Potsdam between 1931 and 1935. The generals were pleased to see that he was applying what he had learned in Germany, intelligently and energetically. But Hitler could not leave his ally, Mussolini, permanently in difficulties. And, after all, it was not possible to carry out his Caucasus plan before the Italo-Greek war was ended.

General List, specialist in both tanks and mountain warfare (he had proved himself an excellent mountain campaigner in Poland), was the man chosen to restore order in the Balkans. At first he was head of the so-called "instruction troops" in Rumania and Bulgaria. Then he became Commander in Chief in the Balkans.

List formed a German army in southern Bulgaria. In March, 1941, he was ready to strike. The first goal of his attack was Salonika. Then his army was to descend upon the Greek Peninsula from the northwest, breaking all resistance at blitz tempo. Then the army would turn around and march along the coast to Turkey, with the Dardanelles as the goal of the attack. The choice of this goal was typical of the methods of the German General Staff. The operational goal was (as almost always in German plans) identical with the strategic goal of the entire enterprise, and at the same time it was situated at the back of the enemy army. For the Turks had followed their old custom and manned the Tschaldschascha Line. This Line pro-



tected Istanbul, the Bosphorus, and the Dardanelles against an attack from the north, but not against an attack from Greece on the west.

Simultaneously with the operations of List's army against Greece, the Italians were to become active in the Eastern Mediterranean and in North Africa. The Italian fleet was, at last, to leave its ports, confront the British Mediterranean fleet in battle, and destroy it. At the same time the decisive assault against Suez would be launched from Libya and Tripoli.

At the same time, also, a revolt was to break out in Iraq which would drive the British out of the Near East. Syria was already occupied by German special troops—with the kind co-operation of the Pétain Government. All Syrian airports were in the hands of the Germans.

If the plan had succeeded, Turkey would have been surrounded on all sides and probably would have surrendered without a struggle. With all communications cut, resistance would have been futile.

Then List's army would have been able to throw almost its full, undiminished weight against the Caucasian oil fields. This army would not have had to depend upon difficult communications from Central Europe; it could be based on the Eastern Mediterranean, which according to the plan would by then be controlled by the Italian Fleet.

Once again the whole plan was built up around the fixed idea of the German General Staff. The flanks! Cannae! The flanks! Once more it depended on flanks, upon turning the enemy flanks and protecting their own flanks. This was true not only for Turkey but for Soviet Russia as well.

Just as the occupation of Norway was a countermove against the extension of the Russian flank toward Finland, so Italy—on a gigantic scale—was to turn Russia's flank to the south, thereby facilitating the German blow against the weakest flank of the Russians: the Caucasus.

The Caucasus was the weakest Russian flank because only small armies could operate there—at least according to German

ideas. This would have made it impossible for the Russians to make use of their numerical superiority. Moreover, they would be restricted to land communications, for once the Italian fleet commanded the Eastern Mediterranean, and Turkey had capitulated, the Italians would also command the Black Sea.

It was a tremendous and well-conceived plan which failed completely. This failure was Hitler's first major defeat and the first crucial victory of the Allies. Perhaps before long it will be possible to say that this was the decisive turning point of World War II.

What combination of circumstances caused the failure of the plan?

First there was the Yugoslavian *coup d'état* on March 27, 1941. The defection of Yugoslavia from the Axis forced the German General Staff to revise completely the plans for the Balkan campaign. List's army could not immediately fall upon Greece; it had to turn northwest against Yugoslavia first. This did not take too much time, but it did take several weeks. And it was costly in men, material, and energy. It cost also, as the following months were to prove, a permanent army of occupation, since the Yugoslavs refused to stop fighting. This army was supplied at first by the Germans, later by Hungary and Bulgaria.

Second: Although the Greeks were beaten, the victory again proved costly in time, men, and material. And since the British, with a surprisingly clear understanding of the situation, supported the Greeks, it took even longer and cost even more. By the time Greece was conquered, List's army was not at all in condition to make forced marches to the Turkish border.

Third: What happened in the Mediterranean was the reverse of German expectations. The Italian fleet by no means destroyed the British fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean, but the British destroyed a number of Italian battleships and the rest of the Italian fleet saw fit to retire to its ports in a hurry. A brilliant offensive led by General Wavell in Libya drove the Italians almost all the way back to Tripoli at the very moment,

in March and April, 1941, when they were on their great offensive against Suez. German parachute and air-borne troops did succeed in capturing Crete, but this was not enough to assure the Italian fleet, now hiding in port, control of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Fourth: The revolt in Iraq was finally suppressed and the Germans were forced to leave Syria in order not to compromise the Vichy Government, which had vigorously denied the presence of German troops. This gave Britain a chance to occupy Syria, with the help of the Free French and without great loss of life.

The Axis had now conquered the Balkans and Crete, but England controlled Asia Minor still, from the Persian Gulf north to the Caucasus and the Russian border.

The consequence was that Turkey was no longer even seriously menaced, and there was certainly no prospect of capitulation. Herr von Papen, now German Ambassador to Ankara, was to be content that Turkey even remained neutral, thus covering the left wing of List's army while it was operating in Greece. But Turkey firmly refused all German requests to allow passage of troops.

And so the encirclement of the Soviet Union failed. If Hitler could not be dissuaded from his plan to obtain the grain of the Ukraine and the oil of the Caucasus—and in the spring of 1941 the generals began to understand that he could not be dissuaded—then there remained only the incomparably more difficult and risky prospect of a frontal invasion of Soviet Russia.

The failure of the Balkan plans was, therefore, not only a German defeat in itself but also an inner defeat of the generals and especially of the General Staff in its struggle with Hitler. The General Staff had projected a splendid plan, the only plan that offered a chance for the swift subjugation of Russia. The plan had failed, largely because of the total ineffectuality of their Italian ally on land and sea. It is not hard to imagine the state of mind of the members of the General Staff. After all, the Italians were not *their* allies; they were the allies of the

Fuehrer and forced upon the generals by the Fuehrer. And now they had ruined a fine strategic plan.

This meant the war with Russia was coming. The Russian war which they were wary of in any form. And now the very form they feared most—the frontal attack—was inevitable.

## 2

Only one general had no worries about a war with Russia. He was Wilhelm Keitel. This general, whom his comrades considered the most stupid among them all, and who pretended to take his inspiration from Beethoven recordings, had actually proposed the invasion of Russia in the winter of 1939, shortly after the conquest of Poland. At that time the others at first thought he was mad—the idea seemed utterly absurd to them. Not that they had any scruples about breaking the newly concluded pact of friendship with Russia. But they were all, as has been told, for peace, immediate peace. They were not even in favor of a small campaign then—certainly not for a war with Russia, which under even the most favorable circumstances would be more than a campaign.

At that time Wilhelm Keitel was quite alone in his stand. Not even Hitler seemed to take his Chief of the High Command seriously. But during the following eighteen months Hitler became far more intimate with Keitel. This meant, of course, that some of Keitel's opinions carried more and more weight with Hitler. The other generals made fun of Keitel and Hitler; they whispered that Keitel stayed in office only because Hitler liked his phonograph records.

General Keitel—or, as he was known after the victory over France, Field Marshal Keitel—had his own special reasons for sticking close to Hitler. He went so far as never to leave the Fuehrer alone if he could help it. He accompanied him on all his trips, appeared whenever Hitler appeared, even went to Berchtesgaden with him. Keitel was stupid, but he had a certain low cunning like many stupid men. And he saw the

approach of a danger that at this time none of his more intelligent comrades took seriously. He began to worry at a time when the other generals still cherished their undaunted arrogance.

The object of his anxiety was Heinrich Himmler.

We have already seen how from 1938 on, Heinrich Himmler and his Gestapo, with their mysterious RW dossiers, began to be a significant factor in the lives of the generals. And we have seen that these generals did not hesitate to serve Himmler's interests when they intrigued against one another. This development grew slowly over the years and did not become obvious until the spring of 1941, that is, at the time of the Balkan campaign. But even then they only began to feel uncomfortable. They were not yet afraid of Himmler. The generals were greater than ever, many of them had become Field Marshals, they had won victories, and Himmler was only a policeman after all.

Keitel was the only exception, and he did precisely what a not too intelligent man would do when he fears that a third person is trying to injure him with his superior—he tried to keep his superior in sight. He followed him like a dog or like an anxious lover.

The SS had not done any too well in Poland, but Himmler wanted to try again. At his request Hitler ordered List to let them fight in the Balkans. Once more the results proved that the SS men were anything but first-class soldiers.

That was quite all right with the generals. They wanted to have nothing to do with the SS. After all, they had not instigated the purge of June 30, 1934—which was to eliminate the SA and establish the Army as the only armed force in Germany—in order to have to fear the SS. Naturally, they could not prevent the Gestapo and the SS from following the Army into the occupied territories—from arriving, in fact, right on the heels of the Army a few days after the occupation. They couldn't very well object to policemen doing policing duties. But the Army did everything it could to keep its distance from the Gestapo and the SS and their activities in the occupied countries.

To mention a single example: The German Commander in Norway decreed on December 13, 1940: "I once more order all members of the armed forces to hold themselves aloof from all internal political disputes of the Norwegian population and not to mix into quarrels which are the sole concern of the Norwegian population. German members of the armed forces have no business at gatherings, riots, demonstrations, and brawls which arise from political causes. All members of the armed forces are to be instructed immediately that in such cases it is their duty to leave the scene of the incidents, so that they will not become involved in the disputes as innocent bystanders and thereby find themselves in an undesirable situation with regard both to the Norwegians and the police forces charged with maintaining order."

Similar decrees from other occupied countries around this time made the same point. Superficially, they all declared that soldiers were not to interfere with the internal politics of the occupied country. But since these internal politics were simply the struggles of the oppressed peoples against their Quislings, this meant being neutral in matters in which the Nazi Party, the Gestapo, and the SS were far from neutral. And these energetic efforts on the part of the military to keep their distance from the "police forces" indicate clearly their distaste and contempt for the police forces. Later on, all this was to change. The Army, indeed, had to play the police in many an occupied country. The Army, not the SS, started shooting innocent hostages.

The Army had many reasons to be at odds with these police forces, and with the Party itself within Germany. It was becoming more obvious all the time that the Party and the Party officials were doing their level best to get hold of the soldiers, or, shall we say, to take possession of the soldiers' souls. It was something unheard of, especially in Germany where, during a war, there are no gods except the generals. Something had developed against which the generals would have protested furiously had it not been that the Party was

responsible—for of course the Party could not be criticized.

Superficially, the Party seemed merely to be engaged in praiseworthy efforts to lighten the burdens of German civilians, particularly of the families of soldiers. It played an increasingly larger part in the distribution of food, of coal in winter, of passes to the movies and the theater. It aided families in sending packages to the husbands, brothers, fathers, and sons in the field. The Party was indefatigable.

"Heroically, the Party members have sacrificed their Sundays, done an untold amount of work, regulated evils, at the same time shunning public recognition and serving the cause alone," the *Voelkischer Beobachter* declared. "The Party is the conscience of the People. It is the living bond between the People and the State."

Whether they liked it or not, the Party members had to shun public recognition. But the Party itself did nothing of the kind. It drove those who had remained behind constantly to write the soldiers at the front about how splendidly the Party was taking care of them. The soldiers must be convinced that basically the Party was the father and mother of all Germans—and if the Party were this, then the Army could not be. Since the great majority of the soldiers considered the war as the exceptional condition and peace as the normal, they consciously or unconsciously projected themselves back home. The efforts of the Party therefore resulted in the Party's winning more and more authority over the soldiers even though these soldiers were fighting in foreign lands. Needless to say, after the outbreak of the war the paragraph that forbade members of the *Wehrmacht* to belong to any party—which meant of course the one and only Nazi Party—was canceled.

But the fact of membership had not too greatly disturbed the generals. In wartime it was pretty much a paper matter and the generals at first felt themselves masters of the situation. What disturbed them, and rightly so, was the fact that the Party did everything imaginable to make more of this paper

membership, and that it won over more and more soldiers by a thousand psychological tricks.

## 3

Brigadier General Philip Faymonville, for four years military attaché to the Embassy of the United States in Moscow, had stressed in all his reports that the Red Army was one of the strongest and best organized in the world. He had, as a matter of fact, expressed this opinion so sharply and uncompromisingly that the War Department recalled him. This is not hard to understand. The War Department could point out that the military attachés of almost every other country flatly disagreed with the U. S. attaché's opinion. And the intelligence service of other countries did not take the Russian Army seriously.

When the war between Germany and Russia finally broke out, virtually the entire world believed it would be over in a few weeks. The newspapers wrote this and, what is more important, the General Staffs believed it. The General Staff of the United States was no exception. General Marshall informed some members of the press early in the war in an off-the-record session that it would probably be the best course not to awaken too many hopes in the general public. Truman Smith, who had been American military and air attaché in Berlin until 1936, explained, on the basis of many General Staff maps, that the Germans would finish off the Russians as they had the Poles—on a much grander scale, of course. There was no possible doubt about it. But, as we have said, almost all General Staffs thought the same.

And so did Adolf Hitler, of course, when he plunged into the great adventure.

As always, Hitler thought in terms of a political war. In Poland, Norway, Holland, Belgium and France traitors, fifth columnists and malcontents had been of great assistance to him. There was no reason to assume that it would be any different in Russia.



On the contrary. In Russia there would be more betrayal than anywhere else. Whatever the world now thinks of the popularity of the Stalin regime, and however right or wrong it was in its previous belief that that regime was not popular, it must not be forgotten that Hitler was surrounded by men who had made it their life's ambition to overthrow the Stalin regime. In other words, whatever were the actual chances of an internal revolution in Russia, there is no question that Hitler overestimated them. For example, Hitler was especially certain that the Ukraine would rise in revolt. Since he thought that the peoples there hated the Jews more than the Communists, his propaganda in the Ukraine dealt almost exclusively in anti-Semitic slogans.

Hitler's idea, then, was first to defeat the weak Red Army—he had no more respect for it than did the rest of the world. Then he would overthrow the Government if there was any left, set up a puppet regime and have this puppet regime hand over to him the Ukraine, the industrial regions, and the Caucasian oil fields. We need only mention here that Hitler also hoped by a war against Russia to win the sympathies of an anti-Bolshevist world and perhaps even achieve a temporary peace with the British Empire.

Toward the end of the Greek campaign, when the generals' plan for encircling Russia from the south had become patently impossible, Hitler indicated clearly that he had decided on a frontal assault against the Soviets. Interestingly enough, the first man to oppose him sharply was not one of the generals' clique, but Hermann Goering. Perhaps the generals were using Goering as a front. But the fat Marshal of the Reich also had very personal reasons for not wanting war with Russia. He told Hitler frankly that the Luftwaffe could not handle a war against both England and Russia.

A heated discussion between Hitler and Goering is said to have been the result of this objection—perhaps it was even a quarrel, perhaps a more serious quarrel than ever before in their long years of collaboration. Hitler may have pointed out

that Kesselring had other ideas. For Kesselring had written a detailed memorandum which set forth that the Luftwaffe could easily fight on both fronts at once.

In any case, Goering retired to his Schorfheide estate and sulked for several weeks. This gave rise to rumors that he had been arrested or confined to his quarters. There seems to be no reason why Hitler should have arrested his friend at this time. Psychologically, the most likely explanation is that Goering went home voluntarily to nurse his rage.

Certainly the rumors of his arrest were premature. As is so often the case with rumors, they simply anticipate the event.

Another more complicated though less dramatic dispute followed. This was the dispute between Hitler, the Chief of the General Staff Franz Halder, and the Chief of the Operations Department von Wietersheim. As far as the latter was concerned it was carried on entirely in writing, although there was only a mile's distance between the office of von Wietersheim in Bendlerstrasse and the Reich's Chancellory. This dispute began when Hitler asked to see plans dealing with the invasion of the Donets Basin and the Caucasus. This was all he wanted—to see the plans, nothing more.

Wietersheim and then Halder explained very carefully that any such project was an impossibility. The left wing of any army that advanced into the Ukraine would be left dangling there. That is, it would have no natural terrain on its left flank, no mountains, no sea on which to lean. The enemy could retreat before the frontal attack and fall on the flank of the army. They could advance from Brest-Litovsk as far as Kiev, because in this direction the left flank of the army would be covered by the impassable Pripet Marshes. But from Kiev eastward to Kharkov and Rostov the terrain was open to the northeast. An army that advanced in this direction would be attacked on the left flank by a Russian army from the Smolensk-Moscow-Orel-Bryansk area and would probably be destroyed.

Halder and Wietersheim explained to Hitler that to cover the threatened left flank of an army in the Ukraine, a second

army was needed which would advance in the direction of Minsk, Smolensk, and Moscow. And to cover the left flank of this second army, a third was needed which would advance across the Baltic States against Leningrad. The flank of this northernmost army was covered on the left by the Baltic Sea. Moreover, there were existing agreements with Finland. Halder was heart and soul for the Russian war, though his Chief of the Operations Department was not. According to Halder's calculations the Russian war could be finished within three months: one month for the decisive battles, two months more for "mopping up operations."

He considered the risk slight. He believed it was better to attack at once than to wait. For now the Germans were clearly stronger, had more planes and tanks at any rate. Perhaps they did not have as much artillery and munitions, but had not the war so far proved that artillery was no longer so important?

The thing to do, in Halder's view, was to rout the Russians completely at the beginning by the use of superior forces; then they would never have a chance to use their own forces which "per se are perhaps superior."

His plan provided for a single, uninterrupted drive of the German Army to the Urals. These could be reached in two months. Undoubtedly the Russians could build up a new army behind the Urals and attack again in perhaps two years. But that was only a theoretical possibility. In reality, they would reach an accord with the Russians. On this point Halder agreed with Hitler's ideas about a revolt in Russia and the setting up of a new regime.

General von Wietersheim was definitely not so optimistic as Halder. But he, too, was of the opinion that if the war could be won at all, it had to be won fast.

Wietersheim's fundamental idea was to be swifter than the Russian mobilization. The stages of the German advance were, according to him, more or less determined by the stages of Russian mobilization. Russian mobilization would need about two

months. (This was not, of course, total mobilization, but of some six or seven million men.) Therefore Wietersheim must decide the war within two months by occupying the Russian mobilization and deployment regions—that is, the territory between the Stalin Line and the Lake Onega-Moscow-Kharkov line, and by occupying the great plains that stretched east of this region to the Urals.

It is an interesting psychological speculation, though only a speculation, of course, that Wietersheim, perhaps against his own better strategic judgment, designed the Russian campaign in a half-conscious, half-unconscious effort to free himself of the influence of Napoleon. In other words, he hoped to succeed where Napoleon had failed. To do correctly what Napoleon had done badly. But then, we can do no more than speculate about this.

The other generals, although they had grave doubts about many details of the Russian plan, agreed in principle with Wietersheim.

Ironically enough, the one great German victory of the Balkan campaign (which, had it succeeded, would have made a frontal assault upon Russia unnecessary) helped persuade the generals in favor of the war with Russia. This victory, the conquest of Crete, proved to them that without a fleet it would be impossible to take a larger, better defended, better manned island: England.

Another factor that helped the generals to decide on the Russian war was the realization that they could not go on maintaining a gigantic military apparatus without doing something with it. There was the constant danger of demoralization among inactive soldiers. Something had to be done with the millions of men that had been called to the colors.

And so the generals finally arrived at the point where they were convinced the Russian campaign could be waged successfully. There is no doubt that this willingness to embark on a war with Russia was, though not the first, certainly a decisive step on the road to ultimate defeat. It was a tragedy-comedy. No one else had tried so tenaciously to avoid war with Russia at all

costs. They were willing to accept anything else. Campaigns, even a succession of campaigns if they had to, but not a war with Russia. And yet everything they did to avoid this war brought it closer.

Hitler had promised them that nothing would happen when they moved into the Rhineland. He had kept his promise. Hitler had promised them that the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Poland, France would be accomplished in blitz fashion. He had kept his promise. Now he promised that Russia would be conquered in blitz fashion. Why not believe him? And as they plunged into it with the speed of a toboggan hurtling down a mountain, they forgot for a single moment what they had known for years, for decades: that Russia was unbeatable.

Only for a moment. But after that moment it was too late.

## GLOBAL WAR

### I

**T**HREE ARMIES were formed. In the south List, the tank and mountain expert, commanded. In the center von Reichenau commanded, and in the north von Rundstedt. Each of the three Field Marshals held command over an army group consisting of several armies; each army consisted of two army corps; each army corps, of two divisions. Altogether, there were some four to five million men at the front (the communiqué spoke of six million). Since the southern army was attacking the immediate strategic goal and had to occupy the most important cities, as well as break through the strongest fortifications, it had to be the strongest army.

In the beginning, von Brauchitsch followed the old Prussian tradition (which he had also followed in Poland and France) and did not take a direct part in the operations. His three army chiefs were given a free hand.

This was the plan:

The southern army was to take first the triangle of fortifications formed by Przemyśl-Lwów and Cernăuți, on the new Russian-Rumanian border.

After taking this triangle, the southern army was to split up into three columns. The northern was to proceed from Lwów via Tarnopol and Zhitomir to Kiev; the center column from Cernăuți toward Dnipropetrovsk. The third column was to drive from Constanța in Rumania along the northern shore of the Black Sea to Odessa.

After taking Kiev, the northern column was to make contact with Reichenau's army between Chernigov and Gomel. (Up to the point of this contact, the Pripyet Marshes would lie

between the two armies, covering respectively their right and left flanks.) The northern column, together with Reichenau's army, would advance upon Kharkov, with the further goal of Stalingrad. Meanwhile the center of List's army, after taking Dnepropetrovsk, would advance through Stalino toward Rostov. And the southernmost column could advance upon Rostov through Taganrog.

On the thirtieth day of the offensive the army should have occupied the Crimean Peninsula and been in control of the Kharkov-Stalingrad-Rostov area, that is, the gateways to the Caucasus. The second month would see the conquest of the Caucasus.

The plan for Reichenau's army was to occupy, immediately, the Vilna-Grodno-Bialystok-Brest-Litovsk line and to make a concentric advance from these points against Minsk. The left wing would then swing from Minsk to Vitebsk, the center advance on the Minsk-Smolensk road to Moscow, while the right wing, after occupying the Mogilev-Gomel line, would make the above-mentioned contact with List's army. On the thirtieth day Reichenau's army was to have occupied the Kalinin-Moscow-Tula-Orel-Kursk line.

Rundstedt's army, finally, was to follow an ancient plan, advancing against Leningrad through Latvia, Lithuania, and Esthonia. Motorized divisions in the van, followed by infantry, followed by the Gestapo which would arrange and organize the political revolt in the border states. On the thirtieth day Leningrad was to be reached.

So much for the plan. How much of it was achieved?

Only the two border fortifications of Przemyśl and Brest-Litovsk fell at the prescribed pace. On August 15—after almost two months—List's army had just succeeded in taking the triangle of fortifications. His northern wing was fighting in the Rovno-Zhitomir-Tarnopol area, his center and southern wing in Bessarabia and at the crossings of the Dniester.

Reichenau's army had done somewhat better. It had reached the Vilna-Grodno-Bialystok-Brest-Litovsk line on the sixth day

of the offensive. Then, according to German reports, came the famous pincer movement and a battle of fabulous proportions that annihilated the Red Army. This battle never took place. According to German reports, the mysterious battlefield lay somewhere between Bialystok and Minsk, which are separated by some three hundred miles. The plan was to encircle the Russian infantry stationed between Vilna-Minsk and Brest-Litovsk by motorized columns which would move from Brest-Litovsk to Minsk along the northwestern border of the Pripet Marshes and meet with the divisions coming from Grodno and Vilna. But in reality fighting was still going on in Minsk; the Russians held the Beresina; they held the terrain between Bobruisk, Mogilev and Gomel—where Reichenau's and List's armies were to have united.

Here for the first time was revealed the Russian defense tactics that made the blitzkrieg impossible. The Red infantry let the motorized divisions race through, but then continued to fight against the following infantry divisions. The blitzkrieg rested on the assumption that an army would break up in panic when the enemy appeared in its rear, especially in the area where its Staffs and centers of supply were concentrated.

The defense tactics of the Red Army were made possible by the high morale of that army. There was no panic and no confusion, and the supply system of the fighting troops functioned despite the presence of armored enemy divisions. Naturally, in such situations much depended on the quality of the lower and middle-ranking officers, and the quality of their leadership proved excellent. These officers were able to lead their troops, although the connection with their superiors and their Staffs was often broken; they were able to resist the attacker and later fight their way eastward to the main body of the army.

The northern army under Rundstedt advanced farthest. It conquered the border states within the prescribed period and on August 15 it reached Lake Peipus.

By August 15 the Stalin Line had everywhere been reached. This system of fortifications stretching from Lake Peipus to



Odessa was less a fortified line like the Maginot Line than an arrangement of forts, blockhouses, shelters, built-in artillery, etc., some thirty or more miles deep. In some places fighting was already going on within the line.

In other words, the Germans had made considerable progress. They had done better than the pessimists among the generals had believed possible. But the schedule had not been kept. Therefore, on August 15, von Brauchitsch decided to take over a unitary, active command. Field Marshal List, who had made the least advance of all, was replaced by Rundstedt, Rundstedt by Ritter von Leeb, and von Reichenau by von Bock. Reichenau took command of the tank army under Rundstedt.

## 2

Von Brauchitsch found the situation favorable, although the war had not yet been won. The world believed that Russia had been completely beaten, that the next few weeks would bring final collapse. By this time, though, General von Wietersheim must have realized that the Germans had lost the Russian war.

For the plan, the great plan, had not been carried out. The two months they had figured it would take them to win the war were almost up and the war was not won. The Russian infantry had not been thrown into panic by the blitzkrieg technique. They had retreated, but they had retreated slowly and methodically. That meant heavy losses for the Germans, and, even more important, it cost them time. Time the Germans did not have. Time the Russians needed to mobilize their superior forces while still west of the Urals.

Moreover, there had been no faintest sign of the hoped-for revolution.

Hans von Wietersheim probably knew how things stood. Brauchitsch did not know.

And in the German communiqués the blitzkrieg moved on.

On August 11 Smolensk fell, was recaptured by Marshal Semyon K. Timoshenko, and fell to the Germans again in Sep-

tember. Brauchitsch undertook a double offensive against Leningrad and Smolensk simultaneously. The Red Army stuck to its tactics of offering time-consuming rear-guard actions that often cost the Germans heavily in men and equipment.

Particularly remarkable was the co-ordination between the Russian army of the center under Timoshenko and Marshal Klementy E. Voroshilov's Leningrad army. The two armies relieved each other in exemplary fashion by skillfully timed counterattacks.

Nevertheless, the ring around Leningrad grew tighter. Novgorod fell.

Timoshenko seized the opportunity offered by the German efforts at Leningrad to start a counteroffensive from Moscow, to the north and south of Smolensk. The offensive seemed to be making good progress; it appeared to be a large strategic offensive rather than a mere counterattack.

To meet this threat the Germans withdrew troops from the Leningrad area, particularly air-force troops. Here, for the first time, Goering's fears were confirmed. The Luftwaffe was no longer strong enough to carry on simultaneous offensives against Leningrad and Moscow.

The Germans took Orsha and Mogilev. A motorized army under Guderian plunged far ahead toward Vyazma and Kaluga, was defeated there by Timoshenko, and had to retire to Mogilev.

Meanwhile, von Bock had thrown the troops withdrawn from Leningrad against the right wing of Timoshenko's army, at the same time reinforcing the attacks from the Minsk, Orsha, and Bobruisk areas against Timoshenko's left wing.

Around September 15 he succeeded—or rather Guderian's tanks succeeded—in breaking through at Gomel. Gomel, situated on the northeastern rim of the Pripet Marshes, formed the connecting link between the Red armies of the center and the south. The break-through here, therefore, meant the separation of these armies and was considered a great strategic success. All the more so since it brought the German armies around the rear

of Kiev. The break-through was quite comparable to the break-through at Sedan. Just as it had robbed the Maginot Line of its significance, so the break-through at Gomel made the Stalin Line, which had held until then, quite valueless.

Marshal Semyon Budenny, who commanded the left wing of the Red Army, had to surrender Kiev on September 20. At first he tried to hold the bend of the Dnieper. On September 30, however, the Dniepropetrovsk dam had to be blown up. On the extreme right flank the motorized Germans under Rundstedt advanced. Kleist and Reichenau forced the bend of the Dnieper, by-passed Odessa, and occupied the Crimea, with the exception of Sevastopol, which they besieged. Then they crossed through Dniepropetrovsk and Melitopol toward Rostov.

Budenny withdrew to a line that stretched from Taganrog on the Sea of Azov through Stalino and Kharkov to the neighborhood of Kursk. There he had contact with Timoshenko's army, which was holding the line through Orel, Tula, Kaluga, Vyazma, Rzhev, and Kalinin, and was in turn in contact with Voroshilov's army from Kalinin northward.

The Germans succeeded in taking this line. On October 15 the Russians were pressed back to a line formed by Taganrog-Kharkov, the Don, an arc around Moscow, and an arc around Leningrad.

The Germans had made enormous progress. But there was no longer any talk of blitzkrieg. And winter was at the door.

### 3

For years one man had used his by no means inconsiderable influence with Hitler to bring about a war with Russia. When the war came he considered it to some extent his personal triumph. This man was the Great Admiral of the German Navy, Erich Raeder. He had excellent connections with ruling men in Finland, and for years had been playing with the idea of using Finland as a base for a sea war against Russia.

The reason he was so set upon a war with Russia was astonish-

ingly adolescent. Raeder knew that the German Navy had no chance of defeating the British Navy. He could not even risk a serious engagement with the British Navy. But Raeder believed he could defeat the Russian Navy. Therefore he wanted a war with Russia.

The German Navy is much younger than the Army. Essentially it was a creation of Wilhelm II, and for that reason alone of questionable value in the eyes of the generals. In their eyes, German admirals, with the exception of Herr von Tirpitz, had never belonged. Herr Raeder certainly did not belong. He was, indeed, a rather ridiculous figure.

The German Admiral was some five feet tall. In his pretentious blue uniform with the wide facings and the golden buttons he looked like an overdressed marionette. He looked even more absurd when he went walking with his dachshund in Berlin. He seemed pedantic and fussy when he carefully inspected the crew rooms and made sure the windowsills were clean—which he always did in spite of his rank. He was unpleasant and deliberately quarrelsome when he met submarine crews just back from months of strenuous voyaging and shouted at them because of their "sloppy appearance."

Moreover, the generals knew that Raeder had not distinguished himself by any particularly brilliant achievements. The occupation of Denmark and Norway, in which the Navy played a great role, had, it is true, been a success. But Raeder's calculations had proved to be mistaken. Raeder had assumed that with the occupation of Norway the entire Norwegian merchant fleet would fall into his hands. This would indeed have been catastrophic for England, fighting desperately as she was to maintain her shipping tonnage.

Worse still, at Narvik, Raeder had lost numerous destroyers and therefore had to retire with his bigger ships. It was definitely a defeat of the Germany Navy by the British Navy. And this came at a time when the German Luftwaffe was scoring a victory over the British fleet, and thereby demonstrating that

ships alone and unprotected from the sky were a thing of the past. This, indirectly, also hurt the prestige of Raeder.

Finally, the German Admiral had counted on getting hold of the French Navy after the armistice with Pétain was signed. Again he was frustrated. He had never dreamed that the British would take so radical a step as they did at Oran, when they sank part of the French fleet.

But what the generals blamed Raeder for most was the failure of the Italian Navy. In their view, that failure was primarily due to the fact that the Italian Navy had not been sufficiently trained in the complicated business of precision shooting in a running battle. A regrettable circumstance—but Admiral Raeder, who had worked closely with the Italians for years, should have known about it and done something about it. All in all, the generals didn't think much of Raeder.

The tiny, sixty-five-year-old admiral was the son of a petty official. His career had been steady but slow. At one time he had been navigation officer on the Kaiser's yacht, *Hohenzollern*. After the war he had been employed in the Naval Office of the Reichswehr Ministry—there was no longer any German Navy, but there was still a Naval Office. He rose slowly, becoming first Inspector of the Naval School, then Commander at Kiel. Finally, in 1935, after Hitler took power, he became Chief of the German Navy. The Navy did not yet exist, but it was on the way, particularly after the German-British Naval Agreement. Hitler gave Raeder many titles. In 1936 the title of General Admiral, which Hitler invented; then, in 1939, the title of Great Admiral, which before him had been held only by von Tirpitz.

Fundamentally, Raeder was a monarchist. The naval officers as a body were much more monarchistic than the generals, for they owed their very existence as naval officers to the Kaiser. But after the debacle of 1918 all of them, including Raeder, became ultra-nationalistic. The peace had robbed them of their Navy. Unlike the land officers, they could not secretly rebuild what had been destroyed; they could not raise their sunken warships. They had to wait until Germany had a political regime

which would make public rearmament possible. Therefore, Raeder and his men supported Hitler much earlier and more unconditionally than the generals. Almost all of them belonged to the Party, and almost all held low numbers in their membership books.

These men all hated Great Britain with an insane hatred. They had, of course, learned all they could from the British Navy, but that only intensified their hatred. With Raeder it literally amounted to a phobia.

It was the kind of complex that unimportant sons have about their great fathers. Or poor relations who must look on helplessly at the successes of their uncles and their cousins and their nephews, while they themselves just manage to scrape along.

Raeder quickly realized that impoverished Germany could never afford as many and as great battleships as wealthy Great Britain. The question of the relative efficacy of battleships and small, fast cruisers is as old as naval warfare. The small fast ships are the weapons of the poorer people. Raeder, who represented a poor nation, did not even have the unpleasant task of choosing. The only strategy that was available to him was the strategy of the poor nations. Consequently he concentrated on light, fast ships that were cheaper and more quickly constructed: small cruisers, submarines, etc.

When the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 was drawn up, Raeder succeeded in obtaining no limitation on the construction of submarines. He invented the now-famous "pocket battleships," like the *Graf Spee*. The fundamental idea of his strategy was to fall on the enemy in surprise attacks over broad distances, to do damage and then to scurry away (the old tactic of the pirates). For this purpose his pocket battleships were ideal weapons. They were, as he himself put it, "faster than everything that's stronger and stronger than everything that's faster." Had he had his way, he would have built only cruisers, pocket battleships, and submarines. But he had to yield to Hitler and construct some big battleships, for reasons of prestige.

Twice he wanted to launch an assault against England. Once, in the summer of 1940 in a combined sea and air action. But all the other German military leaders, even Keitel, declared the attempt to be utterly impossible. The second time was in the spring of 1941. Raeder thought of a new combined sea and air offensive, this time throwing in the Italian Navy which he was perfectly willing to sacrifice. The Germany Navy would be used to establish a hundred per cent blockade. But nothing came of this idea either.

In the end he intervened in the war in two ways. First with his U-boats which he used to sink freighters bound for England and her Allies, and then with his battleships, which he used for exactly the same purpose. This was, in fact, the first time in the history of modern warfare that an admiral employed battleships as raiders. Battleships were, of course, stronger than the cruisers and destroyers that guarded the convoys. But they were also incomparably more expensive and they took years to build. The risk was therefore out of proportion to what might be accomplished.

Yet Raeder was being quite logical. He hadn't wanted to build the battleships; therefore it was not his fault that they made the war against the Allied convoys so terrifically expensive. And since on the other hand he knew that he could never risk a sea battle against England, it seemed senseless to him to save the expensive battleships.

But such logic did not serve to make him any more popular with the generals. Among the many things the generals' code did not allow was the idea of battleships warring against freighters. Another thing they still held against him was the bombardment of Almeria by German warships during the Spanish Civil War. At that time many women, children, and old men had died. The generals made Admiral Raeder, whom they disliked anyway, personally responsible for this outrage.

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## 4

As events were to prove, Raeder did not have much luck. In the north, for example, the Navy did not operate very successfully after the war with Russia began. The Russian submarines repeatedly succeeded in penetrating the ports of Petsamo, Kirkenes and Vardel and sinking supply ships for the German troops in Russia. In the Arctic Ocean, too, Russian submarines operated unhampered. The task of preventing this was specifically the duty of the portion of the Navy stationed in Norway, under Rear Admiral Boehm. Later, Hitler himself removed Boehm for failing to accomplish his mission.

Sevastopol, too, proved a debacle for Raeder, though in an indirect way. He had predicted that Sevastopol would be taken in the fashion of Crete, but, contrary to his ideas, the Russian Navy, which he had never thought important, played a very active part there. While the German Luftwaffe was unable to repeat the Crete maneuver, the German Navy could not even put in an appearance around Sevastopol.

Within the whole framework of the war, however, Raeder's outward activities and failures were less important than his diplomatic intrigues behind the scenes. Here he entered the realm of high politics.

Not only did Raeder know that he could not risk an open sea battle against England, but the blockade too—the war against British and Allied tonnage—was in danger of bogging down hopelessly. Especially when the United States moved to England's side and put her own great tonnage at the disposal of the Allies. While there was at least a dim chance to do away with Allied tonnage if such bottoms could only be replaced from British shipyards, it would be an insurmountable task to do away with both Allied and United States shipping, with their enormous combined capacity for building new ships. Raeder knew that even the most unrestricted U-boat warfare, even the most spectacular successes, would never really exhaust the shipping resources which were at the command of the Allies when



the United States moved to their side. He knew this from the experience of the last war, too. It was, therefore, necessary to attempt to strike off at least part of the American Navy and the American merchant marine. This could be done only by Japan. It was therefore logical that Admiral Raeder was one of the first to advocate an alliance with Japan. And after the war against Poland, he was one of the few men around Hitler who did everything he could to get Japan into the war.

Here he was at odds with all the generals, who with their continental point of view could not see how the intervention of Japan would aid Germany.

It is a moot question whether Hitler brought the Japanese into the war, or whether the Japanese would have struck anyhow. But there can be no doubt that Hitler tried everything possible to induce the Japanese to enter the war, and that he had every reason to try to do so.

As we know, the German situation in Russia was none too favorable even as early as the middle of October, 1941. By that time definite plans already existed for Japan's entry into the war. Hitler and Japan's Ambassador to Berlin, General Hiroshi Oshima, had timed this entry for the very day of the fall of Moscow. Indeed, on that very day, Pearl Harbor was to be attacked, and Hitler and his Japanese friends felt that such a double blow would have a decisive psychological effect on the Allies and on the world at large.

When Moscow did not fall at the scheduled time, Hitler tried everything he could to conceal the situation as it was. To conceal it from his own people was comparatively easy. It was more difficult to conceal it from the Japanese who had military observers at the Russian front. Hitler calmed the impatient Oshima, explained that the fall of Moscow was imminent, and removed the Japanese military observers from the front, explaining to them that his generals resented their presence.

He also, starting on October 12, had begun to give out entirely fictitious communiqués, written by his press chief Otto Dietrich. This, incidentally, was very much resented by the

generals who had never believed in giving out false communiqués. Hitler's reports became more and more pure fantasy. General Oshima was now promised that Moscow would fall in the second half of November and the Japanese made everything ready to strike then at Pearl Harbor. When Hitler was again forced to tell the Japanese that he could not keep his schedule, but that Moscow would definitely fall during the first week of December, they had to notify Special Envoy to the United States, Saburo Kurusu, to go on negotiating for another few days.

In the meantime Press Chief Otto Dietrich often flew to Berlin where he had conferences in the Propaganda Ministry with representatives of the foreign press whom he told—on his word of honor—that the Russians were beaten. "I give you my word of honor," Dietrich pleaded, "that the Russians are annihilated and will never rise again." He did not explain; he implored them to believe.

Eyewitnesses declare that Hitler's Press Chief was unusually excited and unusually eager to convince the gentlemen of the press. It is certainly reasonable to conclude that he really hoped to convince, not the foreign correspondents of Switzerland or Sweden, but certain powers in Tokyo.

## 5

On December 11, 1941, four days after Pearl Harbor, Adolf Hitler stood once more before his Reichstag and declared:

"Italy, Germany, and Japan will henceforth conduct in common and jointly a war which has been imposed on them by the United States of America and England."

This was Germany's declaration of war on the United States.

Naturally he had made no mistakes himself. "Two men only were responsible for this enmity between the United States and Germany—Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt." In Hitler's eyes these two men had at least one thing in common. "I cannot feel insulted by Roosevelt, because, just as with President Wilson, I consider Roosevelt to be insane."

But in the last analysis Wilson and Roosevelt were not the really guilty ones. "We know, of course, that the eternal Jew is behind all this. Roosevelt himself may not realize it, but then that only shows his own limitations. Indeed, we all know the intention of the Jews to all civilized States in Europe and America. We know this is a time when for nations it is a question of 'to be or not to be.'"

Germany had declared war on the United States of America. Or rather, Hitler had declared war. For all neutral observers in Germany had known for years that the Germans feared nothing so much as a war with America. They had not forgotten how quickly the war had ended in 1918, after America threw her weight on the side of the Allies.

Why, then, did Hitler declare war on the United States? Either of two explanations seems to be the most logical. One is that such a declaration was one of Japan's conditions, that otherwise Japan would not have struck at the United States. The second explanation is based on the German people's very fear of a war with America.

Hitler must have known of that fear. For Hitler there was only one way out of the dilemma. If a war with the United States was unavoidable—and he was probably convinced of this—then it was better to declare the war himself. In 1917 America had declared war on Germany. By not waiting, by declaring war himself, Hitler demonstrated to his people that this time everything was different from 1917, this time Germany was stronger, so strong that she would even risk a war that was not forced upon her.

It may be that Hitler allayed the anxiety of the German masses. He certainly did not allay the anxiety of the German generals. There was on his own staff, for example, Karl Warlimont, who incidentally since the war with France called himself Warlimont von Greifenberg, evidently because he wanted to make sure that nobody thought his family was French. Hitler had made him a general. Warlimont was a charming, good-looking, and intelligent man. He has been mentioned here

before; he was the same Warlimont who in 1938 had handed Hitler the memorandum urging that the Fuehrer himself become commander in chief of all the armed forces. After the conflict with his generals Hitler had put into effect most of the points in Warlimont's memorandum.

Warlimont's reform was essentially an imitation of the American system. In fact, Warlimont was one of the German Army experts on the United States. He had spent some years in the United States, had visited West Point, had studied in the Industrial War College in Washington, D. C., and married an American girl. Warlimont knew many details of our "M" Plan—plan of industrial mobilization—and had a very good idea of both the American war machine and the productive capacity of the entire country. He certainly could not have been delighted when his Fuehrer decided to declare war on the United States.

The older generals also were anything but delighted. If they had a good memory, they remembered that Ludendorff had laughed in 1917 when he heard about the American declaration of war. Ludendorff had soon stopped laughing. His next reaction to the American declaration was to propose a great offensive in the spring of 1918, and to win a decision. That is, to win the decision before the Americans could intervene.

The great spring offensive was in fact a great tactical success for the Germans. But it did not win the decision. The summer offensive, too, brought successes, but by then the first American divisions were beginning to arrive. On August 13 there was an American victory under American leadership. Fourteen days later Ludendorff admitted that the war was lost.

It could not be won against a land with inexhaustible manpower and inexhaustible material resources. So much was clear even before the first American tank appeared at the front and before any large amount of American artillery arrived. The American war potential decided the war.

Every German soldier was aware of it. German troops stormed forward, captured enemy trenches, and found extra shoes that the Americans had left behind—shoes made of fine,

shiny new leather. And they looked down at their own tattered shoes. They found the rations of corned beef that the Americans had left, and they thought of their own rations. Then they knew that the war was over.

All these things the generals could not forget.

Naturally, the German generals knew how the United States felt about Hitler even before the Polish campaign. But at that time the United States was not armed. The generals were thinking of brief campaigns at definite intervals. If events had turned out as they hoped, the United States would never have been able to intervene, for the majority of Congress would never have seriously considered intervention. If Hitler had kept his promise to the generals, if they had never become involved in a long war, they would not have had to worry about the United States.

Indeed, if Hitler had only kept his last promise—his promise to finish off Russia at a lightning pace, because Russia would collapse politically—even then they would not have had to worry about the forty-eight states across the Atlantic.

But things had not turned out as Hitler had promised. Russia was fighting. By the middle of December, 1941, Russia was showing no signs of collapse. Russia had, on the contrary, completed her mobilization and was growing stronger every day. The Russian winter, the traditional terror of all the generals in the world, had begun. On the day Hitler declared war on the United States, the Russians were exactly one week along on their first great counteroffensive.

The war was not over, and America was in it now. How could they possibly win the war with the United States as an enemy, if they had not been able to win it before?



■

PART VI

*INTUITION*  
*AND RESPONSIBILITY*

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## THE LEADER

### I

**T**HE DAY after Hitler declared war on the United States something happened that was unique in the history of the German Army and of the Prussian generals. The High Commander, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, resigned his post, and no other general declared himself ready to take over. No German general wanted to be High Commander. This had no direct connection with the declaration of war on the United States. Nor was the reason for this unprecedented situation—as was later claimed—Hitler's desire to take command himself. Many explanations have been offered for Brauchitsch's action. Some spoke of a quarrel with Hitler, some said that Hitler no longer trusted his generals, some claimed the generals were being punished.

The explanation is much simpler.

Von Brauchitsch was saving his face. Weeks before—certainly by October 15, 1941—he had realized that the war could no longer be won and had made certain proposals. The proposals were not accepted. Now, in the middle of December, after the Russian counteroffensive had begun and German losses mounted daily, he fell back on his warnings of October 15. Now he could justifiably refuse to take responsibility for what was going to happen and could take the logical step.

It is not to be supposed that such a step indicated any great intelligence or farsightedness on the part of von Brauchitsch. He merely saw what almost every officer on the General Staff saw, and he perceived it no earlier than the others. The fact that he took the first occasion to protest is simply because he was the only one in a position to take the first step.

What had happened before Brauchitsch's resignation?

Returning to October 15: the German front at that time had many salients; all sorts of pockets had been cut in the Russian front, which were constantly in danger of being cut off by flank attacks. The situation was such that it could not be maintained defensively. There were, therefore, two possibilities. Either the Germans could continue to attack and try to straighten their lines by moving forward, or they could retreat and build fortifications in which to spend the winter.

On October 14 or 15 von Brauchitsch called a conference of the commanding generals in his headquarters. Among others, von Bock, von Rundstedt, von Leeb, von Reichenau, and von Kleist were present. It is not certain whether the Fuehrer was invited to that conference. In all likelihood he was not. Herr von Brauchitsch probably wanted to come to some common decision with his generals and then present the decision to Hitler as coming from the body of them. Moreover, conferences with Hitler had always been held in the Fuehrer's headquarters. So the fact that this conference was held in Brauchitsch's headquarters also makes it likely that Hitler's presence was not expected.

But Hitler came.

The generals agreed with von Brauchitsch. All of them, without exception, believed that to continue the offensive on the whole front would be disastrous. Primarily this was due to the fact that with the constantly increasing cold the tanks would soon be totally unable to operate. Moreover the Russians were growing stronger every day, numerically at least. They had now finished their total mobilization. Consequently, against a stronger enemy and in the face of approaching winter, the German troops would certainly not succeed in accomplishing what they had not accomplished before.

The generals were all for retreating. And not merely retreating to eliminate the pockets, but to shorten their lines and make communications easier. They were thinking in terms of a retreat that can hardly be called strategic. Field Marshal von

Bock even proposed a withdrawal of some two hundred miles.

Hitler had come with General Jodl, now the chief of his military cabinet—that is, his closest adviser officially as well as unofficially. Hitler and Jodl offered the generals a number of counter-suggestions that they had worked out. These proposals had the typical Hitler note. They simply ignored the whole precarious situation in Russia; they had no solution for this situation and so they did not mention it. Instead they suggested a mechanized march through Spain to Portugal and the occupation of Portugal; a revival of the Turkish invasion plan and threat to Russia from the south, which had gone awry the year before. Also, an attempt to take Suez, thus shutting England out of the Red Sea and virtually cutting her off from India. There was even talk about an invasion of Sweden, an extremely dangerous enterprise. A great part of the ore needed for the German war effort came from Sweden, and it had to be expected that the Swedes would dynamite their mines and the railroad necessary for the transportation of the ore, if and when the Germans attacked them.

The generals must have been flabbergasted when confronted with these plans. What was typically Hitler about the whole plan, or plans, was at the same time basically unsound and un-military. Hitler was trying to solve the Russian predicament from the viewpoint of prestige. Hitler wanted to frighten the world and take the world's mind off the fact that he had not beaten the Russians. The generals could not make clear to him that even the success of this plan would be pointless; that even if he frightened the world and perhaps the Russians also, he would not induce the Russians to halt their offensive. Indeed, they would probably continue it with more desperate energy.

But Hitler had also very definite plans for the Russian front. He had not even considered retreating. He had to get Moscow—and as soon as possible for reasons of his own. In order, of course, to get the Japanese into the war, as has been described before. He, therefore, asked for a more decisive concentration of strength against Moscow.

The generals had a last counter-proposal. If Hitler did not want to retreat, which definitely was the safest and the most logical thing to do, they were for straightening out the front, retreating in certain parts into what euphemistically were called winter quarters, and to concentrate their strength not on Moscow but on Rostov. If they could break through at Rostov they could make a dash for the Caucasus and the oil there. The generals, and especially Brauchitsch and Bock, were of the opinion that the scorched earth policy of the Russians would not allow Hitler to get his hands on Caucasian oil. But if he succeeded in getting there at all, it would at least mean that the Russians, too, would lose the Caucasian oil, which would be a terrific blow to their war effort, at least in the south. Brauchitsch's point of view was quite logical. But Hitler wanted Moscow for political reasons.

There must have been a lot of excited talk during the meeting. There was a violent quarrel between General Jodl and Marshal von Bock. Bock was icy, ironic. Bock said he saw no logic in expeditions into other countries and even to other hemispheres at a time when they had not enough troops to throw against the Russians and no idea how many more they would need. Even if such expeditions were to succeed, they would do nothing to improve the situation. Jodl then remarked very sharply on Herr von Bock's incompetence, his inability to broaden his horizon and see the war as a world conflict. Von Bock is said to have answered that he knew only what his Chief of Staff told him every morning and that all this talk about a world front would not stop a Russian cavalry attack.

Herr von Bock spoke the pure and precise but sharp and arrogant German of the Prussian; Jodl spoke a rather careless Austrian German, somewhat sloppy and soft—a language that amused the Prussian generals when they heard it spoken in a musical comedy, but not when it was spoken by a general. Jodl grated on their nerves.

In any case, the conference broke up on no harmonious note and Hitler returned to sulk in his headquarters.

During the following weeks Hitler tried to get rid of von Bock. He wanted to remove him and for a time thought of Herr von Leeb to take his place. Naturally, this came to the ears of Herr von Brauchitsch. Herr von Brauchitsch was dismayed. This was more than a question of tact. It was a completely unmilitary breach of his rights as commander. Moreover, von Leeb would not consider taking von Bock's post; there was still a certain amount of solidarity left among the generals. And anyway the military situation was so bad that none of the generals would have been overjoyed to take over a new post with new responsibilities.

It is not clear whether Hitler's attempts to remove Herr von Bock, whom he considered the major obstacle in the way of his and Jodl's plans, actually reached the official stage or whether they remained merely trial balloons. Probably the latter was the case, since Hitler certainly did not want to risk a refusal on the part of his generals. But an official refusal was all he could manage to avoid. Their predicament had reunited them; Hitler found out enough to realize that he could not take steps against any one of them without involving all the rest.

What he had avoided in February, 1938, now confronted him: the generals were united in a solid front against him.

Who still stood at his side? Jodl and Rommel, who occasionally conferred with him, and General Milch, who was in reality not a general but the distinctly civilian organizer of the Luftwaffe. Then there were Kesselring and perhaps Goering.

Good men all of them, but men who did not really belong and who could not replace the generals. During these weeks Hitler must have thought frequently of how much he had done for the generals and how unable he was to win them over completely to his side. The real generals were just as distant as ever. And more hostile.

Then came Brauchitsch's resignation, which was only the climax of a long development. And Brauchitsch's resignation was, as already said, followed by an event even more astonishing than the fact that a commanding general was laying down his

command; there was no one who wanted to take over his command. None of the fifteen to twenty men whose experience, ability, and authority entitled them to take command was willing to do so. For none of them was ready to take the responsibility. This responsibility was growing heavier daily, almost hourly.

Since the generals' proposals had been rejected, the offensive against Leningrad and Moscow went on. With enormous sacrifices the western suburbs of Leningrad were finally reached. The Finns, who were supposed to attack Leningrad across the Karelian Isthmus, did not advance in spite of German help. Leningrad could never be encircled. The rail line to the east could only be interrupted for a few days.

As to Moscow, the Germans advanced up to sixty-five miles of the city. The situation here was at moments dangerous but never desperate for the Russians. It became much more serious on the southern front.

In the middle of November Stalin had withdrawn Marshal Semyon Budenny and Marshal Klementy E. Voroshilov from the front so that they could train reserves behind the Volga. Marshal Semyon Timoshenko had taken command in the south and now he proceeded to carry out the strategic plan which in its original conception and in practice was the proof of his great generalship, a generalship superior to that of any German general. For the first time he succeeded in a complete co-operation of the regular army, the only half-military cavalry troops and the guerrillas.

The Germans had taken Taganrog, then Mariupol, then on November 22 Rostov. Between Taganrog and Mariupol, guerrillas were in the back of the German Army. Between Mariupol and Rostov, Russian cavalry posted on hills was on the left flank of the German Army. When the Germans had reached Rostov, the guerrillas cut them off between Taganrog and Mariupol. The cavalry, coming down from the hills, cut off the supply lines between Mariupol and Rostov. There was a general massacre. The German tanks were in Rostov, but shortly after-

ward they ran out of gasoline. The Germans had to abandon their tanks and retire. They practically ran into the cavalry and the guerrillas. There was another massacre. All this could perhaps have been avoided had there been more German troops to bring up. But the Fuehrer had insisted on his march to Moscow.

On November 29 Timoshenko had retaken Rostov, and on December 4 the counteroffensive on the entire front had begun. In the Moscow region alone, Klin, Kaluga, Tula, Kalinin, Mozaïsk, and other strategic towns were taken.

By the middle of December there no longer existed a German strategy. The Nazis remained passive. Wherever troops were located at the moment, they erected fortifications. At first they used concrete; then when it became so cold that the cement would no longer bind, they poured water over heaps of snow and sand so that the whole froze into a wall. The German Army established winter quarters wherever it happened to be. In large cities, in villages, in farmyards, in barns. Since a concentration of the troops was impossible because there was not enough shelter, even in the larger cities, and because after all they had to hold the front, the fortification of many individual positions became a serious problem. In a farmyard where sixty men were posted they had to build barricades as best they could, control the entrances and exits with rifles. The artillery could not be everywhere at once; not every farmyard could have a mortar or a cannon.

This state of affairs, which has only been sketched here, explains the extraordinary successes of the guerrillas. They could creep upon isolated farmyards or villages under cover of darkness or in civilian clothes—and then a massacre of the Germans was almost inevitable. Such a state of affairs also offered great opportunity to one group of the armed forces of which little had been heard in World War II, the cavalry. Cavalry was extremely fast and flexible, for the Russians used as few vehicles as possible. The cavalry could appear suddenly and just as suddenly disappear. It could vanish into forests and marshes, needed no roads, could operate in all weather,

even in cold that froze the oil in tanks. During those indescribably cold winter months the sabre of the cavalryman once more came into its own; in sudden assaults upon isolated troops it proved an eminently practical and efficient weapon.

The Russian counteroffensive, or rather the sum of many small counterattacks that began as local and tactical assaults and only gradually swelled into a single unified strategic movement, had a number of goals. The first goal was to allow the Germans no real breathing spell.

This was tremendously important, more important than it appears at first glance. The Russians were determined to utilize their nuisance value to the full. It has been repeatedly stated here that the generals wanted campaigns instead of wars because the German Army was trained for sudden, fierce blows rather than for long, grueling war. A prolonged winter rest would automatically have divided a long war into smaller sections and therefore somewhat restored the character of a succession of brief campaigns. Even in their own offensives the generals had seen to it that this campaign character was retained. In fact, all the German offensives on the Russian front could be divided into individual actions, the longest of which lasted twenty-eight days. Between these single actions there had always been pauses. Of course another reason for these pauses had been to bring up supplies and reserves. But the Russians never paused. From December 5 on, they attacked incessantly.

Other goals of the offensive were, of course, to destroy or capture as many German soldiers as possible, and to drive the Germans back to positions that would make it difficult, if not impossible, for them to launch a spring offensive. The latter goal was probably the most important.

The Germans could do nothing but defend themselves as best they could. And they could not defend themselves very well, mainly because they were not used to fighting in the cold of the Russian winter. The Russians were used to it. More and more frequently the German communiqués spoke of "defensive battles"—which meant simply that they had lost all initiative in



the struggle, or had surrendered the initiative at least for the present. They had to leave it to the Russians to make the moves. The advantage of this to the Russians was that they could now find out the weak spots in the German lines and attack these.

And while this situation was worsening from day to day, Hitler had to decide on a step that to those who did not understand the situation seemed to be a personal triumph for him. He had to take over the High Command.

On December 21, 1941, the official German radio carried the following report:

"When the Fuehrer personally took over on February 4, 1938, command of the entire armed forces, this was done out of concern for the then threatening struggle for the freedom of the German people. Reasons of state imperatively demanded co-ordination of the forces in one hand. Only in this manner could preparations be made for a successful resistance, which, it was known, would lead to total war even more than did the World War of 1914-1918, forced on the German people by the same enemies.

"Furthermore, the consciousness of an inner call and the will to take the responsibility that was his were of importance when the statesman Adolf Hitler resolved to be his own supreme military leader. The course of this war has confirmed the correctness of this realization in an increasing degree. However, it asserted itself fully only when, with the campaign in the East, the war acquired dimensions that surpassed all expectations of the past.

"The magnitude of the theaters of war, the closely interwoven nature of the operations of the war on land and the political and economic war objectives, as well as the numerical size of the army in comparison with the other services of the armed forces, induced the Fuehrer to influence to the utmost the operations and armament of the army and, following his intuitions, to reserve for himself personally all essential decisions in this field.

"In logical pursuance of his decision of Feb. 4, 1938, the Fuehrer, while fully appreciating the services rendered by the former Commander in Chief of the army, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, decided to unite in his hands the command of the entire armed forces with the High Command of the army. For this reason he issued the following proclamation to the soldiers of the army and the Elite Guard:

"Soldiers of the army and the armed Elite Guard:

"The struggle for the freedom of our nation, for securing conditions for the future existence of our nation, for eliminating the possibility to make war on us every twenty or twenty-five years under a new pretext—but fundamentally always for the same Jewish capitalistic interests—is nearing its climax and turning point.

"The German Reich and Italy, as well as the States that had allied themselves with us, have had the good fortune of winning, in Japan, a world power as a friend and comrade in arms. With the amazingly rapid annihilation of the American Pacific Fleet and the British forces at Singapore and the occupation of numerous British and American bases in East Asia by the Japanese forces, the war now is entering on a new phase favorable to us. We thus also face decisions of world-wide importance.

"After their unforgettable and unprecedented victories against the most dangerous enemy of all time our armies in the East must now change over from mobile warfare to trench warfare because of the sudden arrival of the Russian Winter. Their task will be to hold and defend until the arrival of Spring what they had gained with immeasurable heroism and with heavy sacrifices, fighting as fanatically as before. We expect from the new Eastern Front nothing different from that which German soldiers had to do during four Russian war Winters twenty-five years ago. Every German soldier must set an example to our faithful allies.

"Furthermore, as in the last year, new units will be formed and, above all, new and better arms will be given out. Pro-

tection of the front to the west from Kirkenes down to the Spanish border will be increased. The difficulties of organizing connections within this front, which today spans the whole Continent and reaches to North Africa, must be overcome. This also will be achieved.

“Preparations for immediate resumption of offensive fighting in the Spring, until the final destruction of the enemy in the East, must be made immediately. The introduction of other decisive war measures is impending.

“These tasks require that the army and home front be brought to the highest degree of performance in one common effort by all. However, the army is the main pillar in the fight of the armed forces. I have, therefore, resolved today, under these circumstances, to take over myself the leading of the army in my capacity as Supreme Commander of the German armed forces.

“Soldiers, I know war from four years of the gigantic struggle in the West from 1914 to 1918. I lived through the horrors of nearly all the great battles as a common soldier. Twice I was wounded, and I was threatened with becoming blind. Therefore, nothing that is tormenting and troubling you is unknown to me.

“However, after four years of war I did not doubt for a single second the resurrection of my people. After fifteen years of work I have achieved, as a common German soldier and merely with my fanatical will power, the unity of the German nation and have freed it from the death sentence of Versailles.

“My soldiers! You will understand, therefore, that my heart belongs entirely to you, that my will and my work unswervingly are serving the greatness of my and your nation, and that my mind and determination know nothing but annihilation of the enemy—that is to say, victorious termination of the war.

“Whatever I can do for you, my soldiers of the army and Elite Guard, shall be done. What you can and will do for me, I know. You will follow me loyally and obediently until the

Reich and our German people are definitely safe. God Almighty will not deny victory to His bravest soldiers.

“Fuehrer Headquarters, Dec. 19, 1941. Adolf Hitler.”

The world made fun of what Hitler termed his “inner call.” The world thought Hitler’s mind had finally broken down completely and that he was convinced he could do a better job of leading the war than his generals. Nothing is further from the truth. Hitler took the responsibility because no one else would take it. Hitler placed himself at the head of his generals because his generals were no longer willing to act as a front for him. This was Hitler’s first crucial defeat in his struggle with the generals.

It was not by chance that Hitler’s message of December 21 began with a reference to February, 1938, when he had taken command over the entire armed forces. In 1938 Hitler had acted voluntarily; now he acted because he was compelled to.

The cycle was complete. What in February, 1938, Hitler must have considered the opening of the first act in his struggle with the generals, was now revealed as the prologue to the last act. The sorcerer’s apprentices who could not get rid of their evil spirit now withdrew to the sidelines to watch the spirit destroy himself in destroying everything else.

## 2

With Field Marshal Brauchitsch went General von Wietersheim, Chief of the Operations Department.

They said he was overworked.

Overwork? Why not? Von Wietersheim had worked very hard; he had sacrificed his health in endless hours of night work; had lived on coffee and cigarettes in order to complete his plans. But we have said that his feverish activity was perhaps more a subjective necessity than an objective necessity; that he had to shut himself off from a reality he could not

bear. Burying himself in the past, wrestling with Napoleon, so to speak, was a kind of escape from reality.

But he could not escape it forever. Especially not during that terrible winter of war in Russia, when he and his Chief of Staff, Halder, made trips to various parts of the front. The things they saw proved too much for this nervous, sensitive, unstable man. It seemed that all strength had left him.

In any case, one morning he came to Halder and asked for an immediate leave. Halder was dismayed—this was no moment for the Chief of the Operations Department to go on leave. They say that Wietersheim was temporarily arrested, for two or three days. Why? Did Wietersheim's arrest have any connection with the fact that it was his plan that had gone wrong? Did Himmler perhaps suggest to the Fuehrer that Wietersheim, one of those principally "responsible" for the disaster in Russia, now wanted to withdraw from all responsibility; that perhaps he was even conspiring with the other generals? Himmler might very well have done this, and certainly Hitler's not too friendly feelings for Wietersheim would not have made him hesitate for a second.

But all this was, of course, rumor. The only certain thing is that von Wietersheim left, together with von Brauchitsch. He was no longer wanted. He was no longer needed, even. Strangely enough, not even a successor was needed. Since December, 1941, there has been no Chief of the Operations Department in the German General Staff. Hitler became his own Chief of Operations. Or better still, General Jodl got the job, unofficially, of course.

Wietersheim, however, was sent to the front. He was sent to the 14th Army Corps, stationed in the Baltic. His task there was not a strategic one. The man, who for about ten years had devised the most important plans for the German war machine, was now made a policeman. He was to "clean up." He was to prevent "oppositional" acts on the part of the Baltic population. He was to suppress petty uprisings. He was to do what generals despised most: he was to fight the civilian popula-

tion. He was to do what the generals gladly had left for the SS to do, and, logically enough, Wietersheim was put under the command of the SS General Schwaecher.

Thus Hitler did everything he could to humiliate the man who, with or without good reason, had been called the second Ludendorff.

### 3

The world reacted to the news of Herr von Brauchitsch's resignation and the subsequent changes in various commands with a flood of interpretations and rumors that had little real basis in fact.

What really happened was approximately the following:

1. Hitler took over the High Command of the Army. During the first few days after this action he removed a number of commanders, among them von Bock, von Leeb, von Rundstedt, and von Kleist.

2. He promoted a great many younger officers. In December and January, twenty-two new generals were appointed. This was only logical. Hitler was trying to complete now what he had been engaged in doing for years: to put in key positions the younger officers who did not belong to the clique and who were Nazis, therefore more reliable than the old generals. Moreover, he mobilized larger numbers of soldiers for the impending spring offensive. German men between the ages of seventeen and fifty-six were called up.

3. Herr von Brauchitsch was soon recalled. Von Brauchitsch's reason for his resignation had been illness—a serious heart ailment. Shortly afterward, in January, there were reports that he had undergone a serious abdominal operation. By February he had not yet recovered. Nevertheless during the second week of February, Hitler invited him to a series of tête-à-tête conferences. The results of these conferences make it probable that Hitler asked for advice and decided to follow the advice Brauchitsch gave. For subsequently most of the dismissed generals were restored to their commands, among them Herr von Bock,

Herr von Leeb, and Herr von Kleist. They were immediately asked to conferences on the spring offensives, and these conferences lasted between two and three weeks.

4. One man who did not return immediately was Field Marshal von Rundstedt. It was said that he was on vacation. It turned out later that neither illness nor another quarrel with Hitler kept Herr von Rundstedt from returning to his post. He had been given a new, very interesting assignment. He had become commander of the forces defending the entire occupied coast line from Norway down to Spain.

As to the rumors: A large number of illnesses were reported. Not only did Herr von Brauchitsch suddenly fall sick, first with a cardiac condition, then with an abdominal trouble. General Heinz Guderian also suddenly fell ill—a lung disease. Herr von Rundstedt got sick—simply got sick; no cause was given. General Herrlein had heart attacks. General Hoffmann (of Bavaria) had heart attacks. Even Wilhelm Keitel suffered a sudden attack of the grippe. Herr von Kleist fell ill, though the cause of the illness was not reported. Marshal Milch fell ill. General Zenter, who had commanded an infantry division, died. General Driesen allegedly fell at the front. All these generals and a number of others fell ill or died in December and January.

These events were followed by a swarm of rumors that later proved wholly untrue. It was rumored, for instance, that General List had disappeared, that Franz Halder had resigned, that Herr von Bock had been arrested, that Herr von Kleist had fled, that Herr von Leeb had retired.

Radio commentators and newspapers with international reputations peddled incredible tales. Among other things, it was said that Heinrich Himmler and his Gestapo had uncovered a conspiracy on the part of the generals to depose Hitler. What made such rumors doubly foolish was the fact that the men named as the chief conspirators were the very men who were in Hitler's camp: Keitel, Milch, and Raeder. Milch was said to be under Gestapo guard in Berlin. Guderian had somehow

been involved in the affair and was confined to his quarters. Bock had been removed from all his commands and List was the man of the hour.

Other rumors claimed that Hitler had grown weary of being Commander in Chief and had appointed Herr von Bock in his place. Goering's name, too, came up and it was claimed that a complete break had taken place between Nazi Number 2 and Nazi Number 1.

What is interesting about all these rumors is the fact that they were possible. There was by now such confusion that even the silliest sort of speculation had a certain justification.

Rumors, to be sure. But it was certainly not a matter of chance that all these rumors about the death or disappearance of the generals came up at the same time. The fact that there were rumors proves that the generals were in none too safe a position. The Gestapo was at work. What it had to do with the illnesses of the generals, whether some generals were temporarily deprived of their liberty or took to their beds to avoid arrest—these things will probably never be wholly explained.

But one thing is certain: None of the generals really tried to do anything definite about the situation. None of them resigned for good. They were dismissed, but when they were recalled they came back. Perhaps they were sullen, but they came back.

Ministers in democratic countries—and sometimes even in fascist countries—can resign. And they do resign when they are not in agreement with certain matters and do not want to take the responsibility for those matters. But generals do not resign. The Commander in Chief resigns, the man who has the ultimate responsibility. But even after Brauchitsch resigned, he did not cease to be a general. None of the generals dismissed in December, 1941, followed the example of Ludwig Beck, who threw over everything. And there were good reasons for this. For these men were generals, whether or not they wanted to be. They could not get out of their profession any more than they could step out of their skins. Their profession was in fact their very skin.



What Hitler and his closest associates probably feared most was sabotage on the part of the generals. They had come back when Hitler called, but who could say whether they would not try to sabotage the entire war effort from that time on?

There is no doubt that the generals could sabotage if they wanted to. Where does lack of ability end and sabotage begin? Who, without reading minds, could tell whether they did or did not do something because they thought it would turn out well or ill? Merely their lack of enthusiasm might in many cases result in something approaching sabotage.

The difference in effect between orders given with conviction and orders given against better judgment could be enormous.

The short war against France had shown the generals that there were hundreds of opportunities for sabotage that could not be detected. Artillery could be sent to places where it was not as badly needed as at other places. Planes could be used at the wrong times or in the wrong places. Something could go wrong with fuel supplies.

But everything considered, it was still easier to sabotage behind the front than at the front. Practically the entire supply of the front depended on those behind the front, and the generals had little to do with that. They had no opportunity for really large-scale sabotage, such as, for example, Goering's Four Year Plan organization had.

For all practical purposes Goering would have had more opportunity for large-scale sabotage than anybody else in Germany. It may be just a coincidence, and then again, it may be that one of his closest collaborators and friends was the first German general to be mixed up in an affair of sabotage—or was it sabotage?

The death of the famous flier, Ernst Udet, was perhaps an accident; in which case it was the first of many fatal accidents which were to happen to German generals.

## HIMMLER

### I

UDET HAD been one of the great German aces of World War I. A member of the Richthofen Squadron, whose last leader had been Hermann Goering, Udet was definitely not a Nazi. Although he was one of those nationalistic young men who considered the Revolution of 1918 a blot on his country's honor, he was far too unpolitical to take any active part in overthrowing the Republic. With the money of his rich wife, he built an airplane factory and later went into bankruptcy. That was the signal for his wife to leave him. But Udet earned good money as an international stunt flier (he visited America in this capacity); he also earned good money in the movies—once he played opposite Leni Riefenstahl. He was successful with women; he liked good food and drink and was not much interested in anything else. During the last years of the Republic he was a fixture in Berlin café society and had a large circle of Jewish friends.

Hitler, who had always been interested in aviation, had invited Udet to Munich in 1927 to see some of his stunt flying. Udet, who had no idea of the political trend of Hitler and his party, later said he had been astounded at Hitler's wide knowledge of air matters, but that he considered the man more comical than interesting.

After 1933, however, he joined the Party. This was due primarily to the influence of his friend Hermann Goering, and to Rudolf Hess, who promised to take the Udet Airplane Plant out of bankruptcy. In addition, he was given a brand new plane and he suddenly found himself in the midst of exciting events. Goering told him of the Luftwaffe they were to build and

suggested that a man of Udet's technical abilities could easily find a place. Udet agreed to everything; he even entered the SA. But basically nothing changed for him. He continued to associate with those of his Jewish friends who were still in Germany; he had countless affairs with women; he drank a good deal. He still did not take Hitler very seriously. He didn't even like the Fuehrer and when returning from Hitler's receptions he told the newest jokes about the Leader and drew caricatures of him. His intimate friends were well aware that he had a target on a wall in his apartment and that sometimes he practiced shooting at it with his pistol. By chance Adolf Hitler's picture hung directly above the target so that poorly aimed shots hit the picture of the Fuehrer, which was soon peppered with bullet holes.

As a matter of fact, it was only by chance that Udet escaped the purge of June 30, 1934. Like all the SA leaders he had been ordered to Wiessee, where Roehm was holding an important conference. He lived in the same hotel and on the same floor as Roehm. Luckily for him, the killing began at the other end of the corridor. When the first shots sounded, Udet, dressed only in pajamas, rushed out in the corridor, collided with Hitler, and asked what was the matter.

Hitler recoiled, then assured Udet that nothing would happen to him. During the following hours Udet remained at Hitler's heels—still clad in his pajamas—and so survived the night of terror. The next morning he was arrested anyway, but Goering soon obtained his release.

However, he never forgot the experience. In England and America—he traveled abroad several times during the next few years—he repeatedly told his friends that his days were numbered, that Hitler would have him killed sooner or later. He declared many times that the Gestapo was following him, that even abroad he could never shake off the Gestapo agents.

In the Luftwaffe he was assigned tasks to which his real genius as a flier fitted him. He became director of the "Technical Office" and later Chief of the Ordnance Department. The

completion and perfection of the Junkers 87, the Stuka, the Messerschmitt 110 and 109, and to some extent the experiments with parachutists, fell within his province.

In spite of these achievements, Udet encountered difficulties. Many Nazis thought he was not Nazi enough. But Goering protected him, as long as he could.

Along with Goering, Udet had made himself unpopular before the beginning of the Russian war by opposing Kesselring and declaring that the Luftwaffe could not operate on a second front. Udet's friends said later that he had considered the Russian war lost before it began. In contrast to most of the generals, his work was to him a sporting matter and he did not consider success a question of too vital importance. When he was convinced that everything was lost, it meant merely that he lost his taste for his work; it no longer was enjoyable to him.

He drank more than usual and he had more affairs with women. He caroused for nights on end. One morning a faulty order was sent out from his office in the Air Transport Ministry. It was said he had signed it during one such drunken night. Or was it sabotage? In any case, the order caused great damage in the entire production machine before it was caught.

Udet wasn't arrested. Foreign friends who inquired about him were told that he had not really been arrested; that he was merely on a compulsory leave to break him of the drinking habit.

Then he was sent to Goering's estate, Schorfheide. A number of doctors accompanied him. Friends who saw the doctors said they looked uncommonly like Gestapo agents.

In Schorfheide Udet did a good deal of walking. He was unusually taciturn when friends visited him. Finally his friends were no longer allowed to visit; the doctors who were taking care of him said, "Udet doesn't want to be disturbed."

Then came the news of his death. It was reported officially that he had died while experimenting with a new weapon. In Italy the official communiqué declared that he had died while testing a new type of plane. There were whispers of suicide.

But those who knew him well declared he was not the type to commit suicide; that he would not have resorted to it under any circumstances.

The theory that Udet was murdered by the Gestapo received new support soon after his death. For it began to be bruited about that Udet's powerful friend and protector, Hermann Goering, was himself no longer safe from Himmler's hordes.

Someone took great pains to refute the stories of difficulties between Goering and Himmler. As early as the end of 1939, *Das Schwarze Corps* (The Black Corps) weekly organ of the SS, had published an exchange of letters and telegrams between Himmler and Goering. The documents were interesting. Himmler wrote to Goering, informing him that there were rumors that he and Goering were not the best of friends. He asked Goering to deny such stories. Goering, in turn, wrote that he could not understand such rumors, because he liked Himmler very much indeed. The documents were by no means convincing proof of brotherly love between Himmler and Goering. Their publication pointed, rather, to the opposite of brotherly love.

But one thing was sure. The other generals did not like Himmler at all. According to persistent rumors they had even asked Hitler to limit Himmler's powers. That had to do with the SS.

Since the beginning of the war Hitler and Himmler had insisted that the generals put the SS into the front lines. We have seen how this was done in the Polish campaign, against the wish of the generals—especially Blaskowitz—and how badly it turned out. Again, in the Greek campaign, Hitler asked List to let the SS men storm the Metaxas Line. List agreed to do Hitler the favor. The SS men were mowed down by the defending Greeks. Greek as well as neutral reports spoke of a "slaughter."

A similar slaughter took place on the Russian front, where the Russians drove back from the Volga and decimated the men of the Adolf Hitler Brigade.

After this battle there was a violent scene between the com-

mander of the Adolf Hitler Brigade, General Joseph (called Sepp) Dietrich, and General List. Dietrich complained bitterly that his men had been deserted, that List had intentionally sent them into an especially dangerous position and had not come to their aid.

Certainly, General List and his officers were not overdis-mayed at the defeat of the SS.

Even List, who definitely did not belong, could not stand Dietrich. As for the other generals, the very idea that this Dietrich had been made a general was preposterous. Dietrich—a rowdy, a typical “torpedo” during the fighting years of the National Socialists, a man who had been in prison oftener than at liberty, who had committed every crime from murder to petty theft—a general.

From the first day of the war (and dating back to times before the war, of course) there was a broad chasm between the SS and the Army. This chasm was not restricted to the officers; it applied to the men as well.

On the Russian front, for instance, the soldiers would fight doggedly for days, sometimes for weeks, in order to take a town or village, but it often happened that just before they were about to make the last assault, the SS troops would be sent in, thereby getting all the glory which the Army deserved. That could not but make for resentment and bad feeling.

But then the SS had always been something very special.

On March 15, 1942, Hitler delivered a speech in which he spoke of the four pillars of the German *Wehrmacht*: the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the SS. He thus stressed, though the stress seemed hardly necessary, the independence of the SS.

This independence has been emphasized and re-emphasized in every way. The SS has a special position in German law. SS men are not subject to the ordinary courts or to the regular legal code. This goes so far that an SS man can shoot “when he considers himself attacked or encounters a civilian acting in a manner that seems to him contrary to the interests of the Reich.”

None of the generals would have objected if the young SS

men had been included in the Army and had fought within the Army after a normal course of training. But they did object to having the SS employed as a unit, outside the regular Army system. Leaders of the SS thus hoped to get a bigger slice of glory. That was exactly what the generals did not want to happen. Also, they had no power over the SS.

There had been many such refusals. The generals not only did not want the SS as a unit, but they flatly declined to have its losses replenished from the ranks of the Army reserves, as Himmler repeatedly demanded.

They reasoned that if the SS formations could not replenish their losses, the SS as such would soon disappear.

But it was not that easy. The SS had no intention of disappearing. And, as though to prove it, there was another general who rather suddenly "disappeared."

We will remember that von Reichenau was the general who led the invasion of Austria, or rather made the preparations for it, the general who was the hero of the march into the Sudetenland. He was the good-looking officer who had such a passion for sports, who engaged in endurance races with his officers in the Berlin *Tiergarten*—without removing his monocle; the same general who even took instruction from a professional boxer in the art of self-defense. A man who looked thirty-five when he actually was fifty—a powerful, temperamental man who radiated health. He had, of course, participated in all the campaigns and shown on every occasion that he was still an excellent athlete. When a bridge was not finished he had swum a stream; in his roadster he had raced around hair-pin curves at breakneck speed. This man seemed to be as healthy as they came.

Then, in the middle of January, while on his way to Berlin from the Russian southern front, he died suddenly. The official communiqué reported: "Apoplectic stroke."

Apoplectic stroke? Wasn't that rather strange in such a healthy man? The rest of the world considered it strange, at any rate. And so did most people in Germany.

Ten days after his death two contradictory theories about his death had crystallized out of the welter of rumors. Both theories agreed that it was murder.

According to the first theory, Herr von Reichenau had been killed by his former friends, the generals. (This theory had been arrived at by exclusion.) Its supporters pointed out that neither Hitler nor the Gestapo had any reason to murder Reichenau. Just the reverse. Reichenau had been one of the first generals to support Hitler, and within the camp of the generals he had probably been Hitler's most loyal follower. On the other hand, he would probably have resisted any action against Hitler on the part of the generals. Therefore, if they intended to take any action they would have to murder him. And at the same time, by his murder they warned Hitler that they could no longer be played with.

This theory is incredible and sounds like an invention. Indeed, it would have been the first time in the history of the military clique that they had murdered one of their own men, even an apostate. Even if they had been planning a revolt against Hitler, that would not have been necessary. And as the weeks after Reichenau's death proved, no such revolt had been planned. But above all, such a murder was a psychological impossibility. Murder was something Prussian generals simply did not go in for. Even if Reichenau had not been one of their own, even if for some urgent reason (which, we repeat, did not exist) they had had to get rid of him, they would scarcely have murdered him or had him murdered. At most they would have arrested him and kept him in custody.

This theory about Reichenau's murder came from Sweden, from Stockholm, which has been the source of many rumors since the outbreak of the war—rumors that Dr. Goebbels has subsequently taken occasion to deny. It is not unlikely that many of these rumors have been started by *agents provocateurs* of Dr. Goebbels, but this rumor of Reichenau's murder was not one of them.

Shortly before Reichenau's death there had been other stories



which intimated that something was "soon going to happen" to Reichenau. These rumors, too, circulated in Stockholm and in Switzerland and the Balkans (it is impossible to determine where they started). Basis for these rumors was contained in the fact that from the beginning of the Russian offensive, Reichenau's army—he led the army in the Ukraine—had suffered the worst failures and the heaviest losses. Later, after Reichenau's death, this was remembered. The rumors, when they arose, dealt with the prospect of Reichenau's recall, not with his murder. There has not as yet been any precedent in the history of the German Army—or even of the Nazi Army—for the murder of unsuccessful generals. Such a murder would accomplish nothing. Its only value—and even that is open to question—would be in a case of open treason. Herr von Reichenau had never been accused of treason, and from what we know of him it is unlikely that he would ever have engaged in it.

The most likely theory, therefore—it remains only a theory, however—is that the Gestapo had a hand in Reichenau's death. And the proponents of this theory have been able to supply details: names and dates and the scene of the action.

Toward the end of December, shortly after Hitler took over the High Command, he and Himmler decided that the SS ought to become a significant factor at the front. Since all the generals were opposed to the employment of the SS at the front, Himmler suggested that von Reichenau, who was the general most favorable to the Nazi Party, be approached. Hitler and Himmler were prepared to make Reichenau Commander in Chief if he would agree to carry through their plans for the SS.

On December 23 Himmler and Reichenau conferred in Poltava in the Ukraine. Himmler demanded that SS officers be included on all Staffs, that the Intelligence Service of the Army be united with the Security Service of the SS, and that—as he had demanded before—when SS formations took an active part in battles, their losses be replaced from the man power of the regular Army.

What this all amounted to was an infiltration of the SS into the Army. Nothing more, nothing less.

Reichenau asked for time to consider.

On January 11 there was a second conference in which the general declared he could not take over the command, on the one hand because his comrades would never accept him as their commander and on the other hand because they would never accept the demands of the SS. All Himmler's efforts to make him change his mind were unsuccessful.

Five days later three leading officers of the SS, Leine, Radunski, and Pelke, visited Reichenau's headquarters. There was a discussion from which Reichenau's adjutant was excluded; the orderlies had to wait in the anteroom. Half an hour later the three SS men came out and declared that Herr von Reichenau had suddenly had a stroke and died.

Only one person saw von Reichenau's body immediately afterward. That was Walter Neusel, the professional boxer, who had once given von Reichenau lessons. The general had taken Neusel along to the different fronts. Neusel's official job there was that of a trainer and masseur, and in addition the blond tall athlete and the elderly soldier had become very close friends. Maybe Neusel learned more about the cause of von Reichenau's death than the rest of the world. In any case he did not talk. Boxers, too, like to go on living.

The coffin in which the body was placed was sealed and sent by special plane to Berlin. The widow's request to see her husband once more was refused. On orders from Hitler, Herr von Reichenau was accorded a state funeral. The Fuehrer himself was not present, but he sent von Rundstedt as his representative. Goering delivered the funeral address.

"The loss of this man has dealt us a heavy blow," he said. "He leaves behind the memory of a man who has spent himself in the fulfillment of the great tasks of his time, who has given his soul and his heart to the new political conceptions of his country."

## 2

The generals did not resign after the disagreement with Hitler. They had been dismissed, were called back, and went on doing their duty. What did this prove? It proved, if anything, that the generals certainly never had thought of a revolt from without or that they were even capable of thinking of it.

A revolt of the generals was possible only from within; that is, as long as they were generals. Once in Prussian history there had been such a revolutionary action. That was on December 30, 1812, at Tauroggen.

Hitler knew very well the story of the Convention of Tauroggen. It was, in fact, to this Convention that he was referring when, in the Ulm trial of 1930, he denied that it was his intention to take power by illegal means. At that time he had said that he was acting no more illegally than did the German officers in 1807, 1808, and 1809. But he meant 1812 in particular: Tauroggen. He meant that he would behave as had York von Wartenburg.

York von Wartenburg was commander of the Prussian contingent of Napoleon's army when that army set out on its Russian campaign. When the campaign collapsed, York von Wartenburg and the Russian general Divitch met in the vicinity of the little town of Tauroggen, in East Prussia. At that meeting it was agreed that the Prussian corps would no longer fight on the side of the French against Russia; that for the present at least it would remain neutral. This was the first step toward a coalition of the Russians and the Prussians, which along with the Austrians and the British was to fight Napoleon until the French Emperor was defeated.

What is significant about the affair is that in dealing with the enemy General York acted without the authority of his King. Since the King was an ally of Napoleon's, this was high treason. General York saw a chance to free Prussia from Napoleon and he did not want to let the chance slip by. That is,

he took the responsibility. By taking the responsibility he was, in the final analysis, revolting against his King.

This case, which is unique in German history, has been the subject of much comment in German military literature. Like the great battles of the past, it is something that is very much alive in the minds of German officers. Tauroggen meant that a general could revolt—for patriotic reasons, of course—to save the Fatherland. Tauroggen was Hitler's nightmare, at least ever since October, 1941; ever since he knew the generals believed they could not win the war.

It is irrelevant whether Hitler indeed already expected a Tauroggen in the winter of 1941-42. Whatever the case, he took no chances with his generals.

He had them watched closely. The Gestapo had hundreds of agents at the front, right in the generals' headquarters.

A few weeks after Reichenau's passing, early in February, another general met his death. In the military sense he was not a real general. Hitler was responsible for his Army position. His death, too, had an interesting connection with the SS.

This man was General Fritz Todt.

Fritz Todt had been a flier in World War I. After the war he returned to the University of Munich to complete his studies—he wanted to be an architect. In 1923 he joined the Nazi Party and early became a leader in the SA. His work came to Hitler's attention, and shortly after he took over the reins of government the Fuehrer made Todt the head of his pet project: the German *Autostrassen* (highways). The project, incidentally, had not originated with Hitler. It had already been prepared under the Republic. The idea, as far as the public was concerned, was to unite Germany more closely, to help build up the small towns through tourist trade. The real idea, which was not talked about, however, was even then a military one—and its instigator was the General Staff. It is well known how valuable the *Autostrassen* proved later on for Hitler's motorized warfare.

Todt began this work in the Office of Defense Economy, which Lieutenant General Georg Thomas had founded. Here

he met many officers of the General Staff, but did not get on well with them. The reason was the old one: most of the officers were not Nazis at all, and none of them were as enthusiastic Nazis as Todt.

As later mobilizations, both secret and public, proved, the "General Inspector for the Auto Roads" had done a good job.

In the meantime the Fuehrer had assigned him to another important task. In 1938 he was entrusted with the construction of the Siegfried Line. The difficulty of this project lay in the speed that the rapidly changing political situation imposed. Todt accomplished what most experts had considered impossible: with the aid of half a million workers he brought the Siegfried Line close enough to completion by September, 1938, for Hitler to use it as a source of pressure in the Munich Conference.

In between, Todt also constructed for Hitler the new Chancellery and Kehlstein, known as the "Eagle's Nest," in Berchtesgaden. In these latter projects he followed many of the suggestions of "Germany's first architect," as Hitler liked to be known. The unusually talented Todt had the gift, so rare in a personality of his stature, of suppressing his own ideas when the Fuehrer wanted something done his way. The Fuehrer's word was his command.

In each successive country that Hitler occupied, Todt was immediately sent for. From Austria to the Baltic, from Belgium and Holland to Poland, he extended the network of German highways so that the German Army could hold military control of the Continent.

Six months after the outbreak of the war Hitler appointed him Minister of Munitions (previously he had been Transport Chief). Todt therefore had unusually broad powers. In August, 1941, he built a string of naval and submarine bases along the coast of France. Hitler then appointed him Inspector General for Water and Electric Power; thus he became the most important man in the Third Reich after Goering and Himmler. His military career more or less automatically kept pace with this rise. In August, 1941, he became a major general.

His last assignment was the construction of fortifications during the winter campaign in Russia. Later it was said that the failures in Russia cost him some of his popularity with Hitler. But it was rather a special case in which this faithful servant of the Fuehrer suddenly revealed unusual stubbornness and reluctance to obey orders. It was the fanaticism of the specialist that led him into resistance to the Fuehrer.

Toward the latter part of January, 1942, Hitler signed a decree appointing a new Inspector General to the Department of Motor Vehicles. The new appointee was Jakob Wehrlin, Brigade Leader of the SS and former branch head for the automobile firm of Daimler-Benz. Wehrlin was a personal acquaintance of Hitler's who had no real ability for such an important post.

Up until then Todt had got along splendidly with the commander of the supply services who also was controller of motor vehicles, Major General Paul von Schell.

Todt protested against Schell's removal, though there was no doubt that Schell had been a failure in some respects. However, it was difficult to see to what extent he was personally to be blamed, for the problems he had to solve could not be solved. In any case, Todt felt that replacement of an experienced man by an SS man was extremely risky at a moment when so much depended on the transportation system.

Todt had an interview with Hitler who told Todt that in the future he wanted to be kept more thoroughly and more rapidly informed on all transportation questions than he had been in the past. But the Fuehrer nevertheless postponed publishing his decree for a few days. When it finally appeared it turned out that Wehrlin, the SS man, had been given extensive powers, powers that in some matters interfered with Todt's own.

Todt was angered by the affront. In conversation with his friends he declared that he had no objection if a better man took his place. "But selling old cars," he said, "doesn't seem to me sufficient experience to qualify a man for such a position at this time."

A few days after this conversation Major General Todt was

dead. According to the official broadcast he had been killed in an air accident while "carrying through his military tasks in the East."

An accident? Or did his sudden death have any connection with Todt's opposition, even in this very special case, to the SS and therefore to Hitler?

Todt, too, was given a state funeral at which Hitler himself spoke. He praised the man and his work and suggested that the German people would not realize the full significance of that work until after the war.

### 3

Indeed, there was another significance to General Todt's death. After all, Todt's *Autostrassen* could be used not only for sending soldiers into foreign countries and sending supplies after them. The highways could also be used in the opposite way.

Later, rumors sprang up that Todt had been in conflict with Goering in his capacity as head of the Four Year Plan. It is possible that there had been some passing disputes. But there is no doubt that Fritz Todt's work had been of enormous value to Goering's Four Year Plan and that Goering lost in Todt one of his most important collaborators.

Until the beginning of the Russian war only a few people knew that Hermann Goering's position in the Third Reich was no longer what it had been since 1933. Outwardly, everything seemed to be going well. Goering possessed the highest titles, the most decorations, and the greatest number of offices. Moreover, he was the man Hitler had officially appointed to be his successor.

But people who knew, realized that things stood rather differently.

They knew of constant petty disputes between Hitler and Goering. None of these disputes was of any importance in itself but the skirmishes occurred with remarkable regularity. Each time, Goering would retire in fury to Schorfheide and spend a

few days or weeks there. As soon as whispers of arrest began to spread, Goering would reappear at some official function and have himself photographed shaking hands with Hitler. But sharp-eyed observers believed there was no longer the same old cordiality in their handshakes.

Sometimes word got around that Hermann Goering was overworked, that he intended to drop one of his many offices. Sometimes it was said he would retire as head of the Air Force, or as chief of German war production. But nothing of the kind happened during the winter of 1941-42.

Some believe that Goering was only playing this part, and that he was playing it with Hitler's knowledge and approval; that he was pretending to be a conservative so that if the generals revolted he could step into power in Germany. Repeatedly, the rumor has sprung up that the Allies were approached by certain neutrals and asked whether they would be willing to deal with a Goering government if Hitler should retire or be overthrown. And the Allied reaction has always been that a Goering regime would only be a Hitler regime in disguise, and that Goering would revolt only on orders from Hitler.

Naturally, we cannot prove that Goering did not play a part. But all of Hitler's actions with regard to Goering since the fall of 1941 seem to show that he no longer trusts his former comrade, that he thinks Goering has gone over to the generals and would fight on their side if it ever came to open combat.

More important even: Goering was no longer the old Goering. Goering had undergone a rather strange transformation. He was no longer so revolutionary; he had become almost conservative. He was more interested in industry than in the masses; more concerned about the Army than the SA or the SS. He had grown closer to the generals; in fact, he had become one of them. The trial of honor against von Fritsch proved clearly that he was now on the side of the generals.

It has already been pointed out how Kesselring steadily advanced during the summer of 1940 and came more and more into Hitler's confidence. This meant that Goering was losing



the Fuehrer's confidence. General Milch, too, who had been satisfied with remaining the second man after Goering, and who was completely servile with the fat Marshal, changed his attitude toward the man whom he had helped build the Luftwaffe. Whenever he could, General Milch frequented Hitler's headquarters and conferred with the Fuehrer over Goering's head. When Goering complained—which he did several times in the fall of 1941—Hitler placated him with the explanation that they were only trying to save his strength, that he was so overburdened with all his work they had to relieve him of a few of his duties.

Then came the accidents, such as that of General Udet. Such accidents in the Luftwaffe curiously enough struck men who had been on particularly good terms with Goering and whom Goering considered his most reliable associates: men like Colonel Moelders, Captain Balthasar, Lieutenant Colonel Pfandt, General Waltzburg. Perhaps there was more design than accident in this. Goering was becoming rather lonesome in the Luftwaffe that he had built up.

Was this a matter of chance, or of deliberate intention?

If we consider the Luftwaffe as it is generally considered, there is no apparent reason why Hitler should take any action against Goering. If we consider the Luftwaffe as a part of the German armed forces, as a weapon to strike the external enemy, there is no reason for Hitler to have limited Goering's powers. He had built the Luftwaffe as quickly and as well as it could have been built at such speed. He had had success with the Luftwaffe. In fact, wherever the Luftwaffe was employed as it had been intended to be used—for short, quick actions—it proved exceptionally successful. It was not Goering's fault that later it proved inadequate in a war of long duration and failed to have the success it could not by its very nature have. On the contrary. Goering himself had warned before the Russian war began that the Luftwaffe was not equipped for such a task.

But just as there was another way of considering the *Autostrassen* so also was there another way of considering the Luft-

waffe. Not as a war machine against the external enemy, but as a weapon against the internal enemy.

## 4

Hitler began his fight with Herr von Fritsch mainly because he did not want to have the Luftwaffe incorporated into the Army, as Fritsch had demanded. The reason for this was that from the very first he wanted to make the new air arm a purely Nazi weapon—if only so that he would not have to repeat in the Luftwaffe the struggle he was having with his generals. Keeping the Luftwaffe independent seemed to him the surest way to avoid that, since Goering was the man who had built up the new arm. Goering was then, after all, his best and most reliable man.

It is doubtful whether Hitler and Goering in the early years seriously considered the possibility of a civil war in which the Army or a part of the Army would oppose the Nazi regime. But Hitler was always a man to make himself as safe as possible.

And he was no longer safe with Goering.

Some time in 1936 Goering spoke about this possibility of a civil war in Germany, and explained that the Luftwaffe could be used not only in a future war but in a future civil war, and that its use would decide the issue. He closed with the words:

“Victory will go to the side on which I am.”

If these words reached Hitler's ears—and of course they did—he certainly did not forget them. Perhaps that is why Goering did not become Chief of the High Command in 1938.

Hitler was never safe with the generals, particularly not in case of war.

The war would place between six and ten million armed men at the disposal of the generals and give them a magnificent chance to back up an opposition by force of arms, if that was what they were looking for. From Hitler's point of view this meant the necessity for redoubled caution.

There must never again be a November, 1918, Hitler himself

stated repeatedly. That is, it must never again be possible for the country to collapse, even if a defeat at the front cannot be avoided. And there must never again be a revolution. To assure this, to prevent any possibility of revolt within the country, the SS was organized by Himmler as Hitler's private army, and given special training in the technique of fighting civil war. For this reason it was kept intact and not incorporated into the regular Army.

The SS had a strength of five hundred thousand men at the outbreak of the war.

Heinrich Himmler, the creator of the SS, did not fail to make it clear why this independent army had been established.

"In a future war we shall have not only the Army front on land, the Naval front on water, the front of the Air Force in the air, but we shall have a fourth theater of war—Germany within. The internal theater of war will be the 'to be or not to be' of our German nation."

In a word, Himmler had built up the SS for the civil war he expected or perhaps in the hope that the other side—any other side—would not venture on a civil war in the face of Hitler's strong private army.

Originally, neither Hitler nor Himmler had thought of using the SS in the war. It had been created for other purposes. But the fact that these strapping young men remained at home while many older men fought abroad made for bad blood in Germany. Therefore Himmler thought it would be well to send a number of SS formations to the front. No more than fifty thousand of the five hundred thousand SS men ever appeared at the front. Dr. Goebbels alone deserves the credit for making these fifty thousand seem like five hundred thousand.

Probably it did not disturb Himmler that the SS proved to be no good at the front. The rules of warfare at the front are different from the rules of civil war.

The *Schutzstaffel* (SS) is today divided into thirty-six groups with headquarters all over Germany. They are stationed so as to make contact with the civilian populace as difficult as

possible. Bavarians are stationed in North Germany, North Germans in Austria, etc. They are equipped with the weapons best suited for civil war. They know exactly what strategic points to capture in case of civil strife: railroad stations, telegraph offices, broadcasting stations, airports. At all strategic points in every city in Germany, machine guns, anti-aircraft guns, and anti-tank guns are installed in concrete and guarded day and night by SS men. In all German cities there are bombproof shelters for SS men.

The SS has its infantry, its armored divisions, its artillery and its espionage divisions, where, incidentally, Reinhard Heydrich started his career. According to the latest information, Himmler has even begun to set up an air force for the SS, to include some three thousand planes. This force will bomb whatever Hitler and Himmler order bombed—the German Army or German cities.

The entire apparatus will be used in the extreme case of revolution within Germany, a revolution of the Army, a collapse of the Army at the front, or a revolt of the generals. The SS is ready for any eventuality. Above all, by its very existence the SS deters such possibilities.

Do five hundred thousand SS men have a real chance against the German Army if it should ever turn against Hitler?

It is very likely that a comparatively small army trained for civil warfare can defeat a much larger army not trained for civil war. And after all, in no case would the entire German Army return from the front for the purpose of fighting a civil war for the overthrow of Hitler. Large sections of the Army would refuse to continue the war in Germany proper, in the streets of their own towns against their own people, no matter how they felt about Hitler.

But the SS suffers no such inhibitions. The SS has been trained for just that kind of fighting.

Therefore, whatever Hitler's situation on the Russian front was in the winter of 1941-42, however miserable were the German soldiers, the Fuehrer could be sure of one thing: he had so

far won the war within Germany. And at that time no general was strong enough to conquer him on the battlefront of Germany, even if he wished to do so.

## 5

And what was the situation on the other battlegrounds during the winter of 1941-42?

In Libya the Italian allies, as the German generals had expected, had once more proved their inefficiency. And to Libya Adolf Hitler had sent one of his most capable and energetic men: General Erwin Rommel.

It was an ironic twist of fate that Rommel had Italians under his command in Libya. For if anyone thought less of the Italian soldiers than the members of the German General Staff, that person was Rommel. During World War I, when Italy was fighting on the Allied side, he had significant experiences with the Italians. On the Italian front he commanded a group of some one hundred and fifty to four hundred and fifty men who were operating absolutely independently of the Austrians and engaging in individual actions. The group was something like the present-day commandos. Even then Rommel was well known for his daring. He once, with four hundred and fifty men, succeeded in capturing eighteen thousand Italians. For that action he won the *Pour le Mérite* and gained the conviction that Italian soldiers were very poor stuff.

In Libya he did not bother about questions of prestige. He disregarded the injured feelings of the Italian officers and assigned the Italians only to less important tasks. Almost from the moment he arrived in Libya he had extraordinary success—all the more extraordinary when we consider that his success was based almost entirely on the small number of troops and tanks the Germans had transported there.

To some extent Rommel's successes were also triumphs for the German General Staff. The war in Libya had been well prepared. The General Staff had set up a special institute

(*Deutsches Kolonialinstitut*) in Tuebingen and for some ten years the institute had studied the nature and demands of desert warfare. The proper equipment had been developed. (Though the story of the air-conditioned tanks was concocted entirely by Joseph Goebbels and sent to Stockholm, from where it made its round all over the world.)

But the successes of the Axis cannot be attributed only to the preparations of the General Staff. Rommel's unorthodox tactics—or his new ideas, to put it another way—deserve a large share of the credit.

Rommel broke with the axiom that had stood fast until he arrived in Africa: that only the coast counted. Along the coast between Tripoli and Cairo—the goal of the German attack—the cities were situated. The coast had to be held if any army was to receive water, food, planes, and reinforcements. Beyond the coast lay the endless desert. Whoever controlled the coast controlled Libya—and possibly the road to the Suez Canal.

Rommel realized this. But he did not see why it was necessary to remain on the coast in order to fight for the coast. Nor did he see any particular necessity for fighting only along the coast.

It was indeed impossible to figure Rommel out. In France, when it would have been the normal procedure to leave the road, he stayed there with eight hundred tanks. In the desert, where it was the normal procedure to stay on the road or at least along the coast, he left it.

With his comparatively small tank units he turned to the interior, cut an arc through the desert, and suddenly reappeared somewhere along the coast again. It was a hazardous game, but the defense had an equally difficult time of it. Even if the defenders' reconnaissance planes found out where Rommel was, they had to risk dividing their force and thus surrender their original superiority.

This system enabled Rommel to capture Bengasi twice. The second time Hitler appointed him a Field Marshal.

The British only too slowly realized that in Rommel they had

encountered an enormously skillful general. In an action that accorded well with the old romanticism of desert warfare, they tried to capture him personally. In November, 1941, a British commando force crept two hundred miles behind the Axis front, waited in the desert for the hour of a British attack, and then crept up to the German headquarters and made its way into the house Rommel occupied. They found a number of his staff officers and killed several with hand grenades and bullets; they also destroyed the entire headquarters. But they did not find Rommel. He chanced to be out.

In the desert, too, Rommel did not abandon his habit of fighting in the front ranks and commanding the battle from a "ring-side seat." According to an American correspondent who was held captive for a time, he was always full of energy and kept urging his soldiers on. Sometimes he took off half an hour to lecture one of the captive officers on tank tactics and to show him the mistakes the British had made. He seemed to find great satisfaction in such conversations.

Twice during the winter of 1941-42 he flew back to Germany. At least once he went to Berlin to confer with Hitler. For a time it was rumored that he would be given an important command on the Russian front. But then he returned to Africa again.

While Hitler was preparing the spring offensive, or the summer offensive, in Russia, Rommel kept the African situation in flux. Although up to the summer of 1942 he had not achieved a really decisive victory, he succeeded, with a ridiculously small body of troops, in remaining a constant threat to Suez. His tanks were a Sword of Damocles suspended over the heads of the Allies.

Such was the situation up to the summer of 1942. Then Rommel struck once more.

His attack on Tobruk during the first week of June was repulsed, but he was able to take Bir Hacheim, the southern point of support of the British position running from El Gazala along the coast to the south. The British retired to the Egyptian frontier. On June 21, Rommel could take Tobruk almost with-

out a battle. He captured thirty thousand prisoners. He then immediately turned east. The British retired in the direction of Alexandria and finally took a stand around El Alamein, about 70 miles from Alexandria.

This was the situation at the end of August. For many weeks Rommel had not tried to follow up his successes and start a new offensive. Neither did the British try any important counter-offensive. Evidently neither of the opponents felt strong enough. As the situation stood by the end of August, Rommel still constituted an enormous threat at Cairo, the Suez Canal and the Near East. If Rommel should succeed, it would be a great victory for Hitler. Perhaps as great a victory as the defeat of France. But just as with the defeat of France it would not be decisive. It would simply mean that he would have to go on and on.

## 6

Till July, 1942, the other victories of the Axis had to be won by the Japanese.

During the first six months of the war the Japanese had done very well indeed. The timetable of their conquests was impressive:

Hong Kong—December 25; Manila—January 2; Singapore—February 15; Batavia—March 5; Rangoon—March 8; Bataan—April 9; Corregidor—May 6; Aleutians—June 7 to 14.

By June, however, the Japanese had already suffered the first set-back. American forces had done well in the battle of the Midway Islands. By August the Allied offensive in the Pacific had begun. The Americans had landed on Tulagi, the most eastern of the Solomon Islands....

The Japanese so far had waged a blitzkrieg as lightning as any of Hitler's. To be sure, it was becoming increasingly apparent that the Japanese were not making war to support Hitler. It was already apparent that they were fighting their own war and not worrying about what moves would be best for the Axis. And what was more important—it was becoming apparent that



one of Hitler's calculations had been in error. The war with the Japanese was not hindering the United States from taking a very active part in the war against Hitler.

Those of Hitler's generals who still remembered World War I and who knew something about America's productive capacity had paled when Hitler declared war on the United States. But the goals for American production in the next two years, which President Roosevelt set exactly one month after Pearl Harbor, exceeded by far their worst nightmares.

A few of Roosevelt's figures:

For 1942: 60,000 planes, 45,000 tanks, 20,000 anti-aircraft guns, 8,000,000 tons of merchant ships.

For 1943: 125,000 planes, 75,000 tanks, 35,000 anti-aircraft guns, 10,000,000 tons of merchant shipping.

And only a few months after this statement the members of the General Staff must have known that those figures would be met for the year 1942.

The prospect for the future was not cheerful. In the spring of 1942 the German Air Force was already in a difficult predicament. At that time the Luftwaffe had at its disposal some 5,000 first-line planes and some 25,000 training and transport planes. These 5,000 planes were distributed over ten different sectors. On the French coast was Marshal Sperrle with the Third Air Fleet (some 1,000 planes). In Norway, General Stumpff controlled a part of the Fifth Air Fleet (some 300 planes). In Italy and Sicily General Kesselring directed the Second Air Fleet (about 700 planes); in Greece and Crete General Loehr worked with a part of the Fourth Air Fleet (some 100 planes); in North Africa General Froehlich was attached to Rommel's Africa Corps with about 500 planes. The Russian front was divided into four sectors: Finland-Murmansk, Baltic-Leningrad, Central Sector, Southern Sector. Here parts of the Fourth and Fifth Air Fleets, altogether some 1,700 planes, were located. And in the Balkans General Richthofen commanded about 200 planes. Finally between 400 and 500

planes, mainly night fighters, were stationed in Germany itself, under the command of General Kammhuber and General von Doerstling.

The experiences of the past few months had shown that the losses in planes could be met out of production. But the production could no longer be increased. That meant that from the spring of 1942 on, the Germans could not ever count on having more than five thousand first-line planes at their disposal on the various fronts. It meant that the superiority of the R.A.F. in the West and the equality of the Russian Air Force in the East could not, in the future, be overcome. It meant that with increasing British and American production the Luftwaffe would be forced entirely on the defensive.

The first weeks of June proved the correctness of this calculation. The terrific bombings of Cologne, Rostock, Lubeck, Bremen and Essen with air fleets of a thousand and more planes were only a prelude to what was to come. The Ruhr was bombed constantly. Almost every day, smaller sized, so-called routine bombings were executed with 200 to 500 planes against St. Nazaire, Dieppe, Cherbourg, Boulogne, Emden, Osnabrueck, etc. Duesseldorf and Mainz were bombed to rubble.

Moreover, there was the ever-growing threat of a second front, an invasion of the European Continent by the British and the Americans. Hitler's actions in the spring of 1942 showed that he was afraid of such an invasion.

He sent Himmler into Holland, he sent List to Norway, and most important of all, he made Rundstedt commander of the entire coastal defenses, from northern Norway to Spain.

Herr von Rundstedt carefully inspected the fortifications along the coast, particularly the French-Belgian coast. It was not quite two years ago that he had been in this region as a victor, as the representative of an invincible military power that was on the point of invading the homeland of its last enemy. Now, scarcely two years later, he was here to prevent an invasion of the Continent. It is hard to think of a better symbol of the changed times than Herr von Rundstedt's two tours of France.

Field Marshal Keitel traveled more than any other general. He traveled all over Europe.

On April 29 and 30 he was with Hitler in Salzburg and attended the Fuehrer's conference with Mussolini and a number of other important Axis figures in the military and diplomatic fields. "Conversations between the two chiefs of government were marked by the spirit of close friendship and indissoluble comradeship in arms of the two nations and their leaders," the official communiqué proclaimed. At the end of the conference, Keitel, aided by General Jodl and Field Marshal Kesselring, had talks with the Italian Chief of Staff, General Ugo Cavallero.

It is not hard to understand that Keitel, who since October, 1940, was Commander of the Italian and German troops in Africa and therefore knew something about the Italian Army, was not satisfied with the performance of the Italians. The fact that Hitler and Mussolini had got on so well was not much help. Keitel knew perfectly well what the "indissoluble comradeship in arms" between the two armies meant. He knew that many of Italy's high officers, in particular Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, former African commander, and Marshal Pietro Badoglio, former Italian Chief of Staff, were moving heaven and earth to persuade Mussolini that the best course would be to make a separate peace before Italy was wholly defeated.

The condition of his Italian ally was not the only reason for the German War Minister's nervousness. On his many trips during the winter of 1941-42 he had visited many friendly, or allegedly friendly, countries, and the things he had seen and heard in these countries were not calculated to reassure him.

In January, for example, he had been in Budapest. Here he had been received with a lot of fanfare. But he was not interested in honors; he was interested in support for the war against Russia. However, most of the talk he heard concerned Rumania, and it was clear to him that instead of sending troops to Russia, the Hungarians were more interested in fortifying their frontier against Rumania.

In Bucharest everyone high and low was at once unhappy and

furious over enormous Rumanian losses on the Russian front. Some spoke of two hundred and fifty thousand men. And Keitel gathered that the Rumanians were all against the war, at least against the war with Russia. A war with Hungary, of course, would be another matter.

This was the attitude of Germany's two allies who were fighting side by side in Russia. But after all they had at least sent soldiers; the Bulgarians still refused to send any at all. Field Marshal Keitel was given to understand that the Bulgarians would gladly march against Turkey at any time. Keitel had to dampen their eagerness; he had not come to discuss a war against Turkey. Hitler had too many and too extended fronts as it was, and at the moment there could scarcely be any question of another front. Furthermore, his confidence in the Bulgarian Army was none too strong. He suspected that in case of a Turko-Bulgarian war, German troops would have to intervene.

Field Marshal Keitel then flew to Yugoslavia and we may well assume that he wondered a little at the Yugoslavs, those strange people who simply refused to make peace, who refused to allow their country to be occupied peacefully by the enemy. Instead they had retreated into the fastnesses of their wild mountains and were continuing the fight, thereby immobilizing enormous contingents of German troops—troops that could well be used on the Russian front. As a matter of fact, Keitel was so obsessed with the idea of obtaining more soldiers that he even stopped off in Bratislava to find out from the Slovakian authorities whether more Slovaks could be sent to the Russian front.

Perhaps Wilhelm Keitel, too, thought occasionally now of Taurogen. After all, even he could not deceive himself into believing that Germany's allies sent their troops to the Russian front with great enthusiasm. They sent them with even less enthusiasm than Napoleon's allies had sent their men to Russia in 1812. So it was not at all difficult to imagine that one day if things really went badly for Hitler in Russia, those allies might turn into enemies—as the Prussians had done in respect to Napoleon after the Convention of Taurogen.

Keitel covered several thousand miles on his tour of Europe, searching for more and better allies. But the distance he covered was nothing compared to the distance he had covered in his own mind since the beginning of the Russian campaign. He was the one who had been sure the Russian war would take only a few weeks. He was the one who had urged this war.

Perhaps he was at least beginning to realize things. Perhaps he was beginning to realize what his comrades had known for years and had repeatedly stated: that he was the most stupid man among the German generals.

## 7

In October, 1941, after Smolensk was taken, Hitler had claimed that the Russian war was over, the Russian Army annihilated. By January the German newspapers were candidly admitting that Hitler had been mistaken. "We must admit that the Russians have proved far stronger than our responsible leaders foresaw at the outbreak of the war, although they included all possibilities in their calculations," wrote the *Berliner Boersenzeitung*. This paper was owned by the von Stuelpnagel family; to some extent, therefore, it spoke for the generals. But then all German newspapers wrote in similar vein.

The man who controlled these newspapers, Dr. Joseph Goebbels, even went further. On December 20, 1941, a few weeks after Hitler had proclaimed the victory as already achieved, Goebbels delivered a radio address that shocked all Germany as well as the rest of the world. He said:

"I know that at the last collection the German people gave all they could spare in consideration of the tense situation regarding textile supplies. Nevertheless, there are still in the homeland countless objects of winter equipment of the civil population which the population admittedly cannot very well spare but which, however, the front needs at this time without a doubt to a greater degree than the Fatherland.

"We certainly have to deprive ourselves at home to a large

extent, but one would not do justice to the front if one would compare such small curtailments with the sacrifices made at the front during this winter campaign.

"At home everybody has a roof over his head and a bed to sleep in. The nutrition is admittedly limited, but compared with that of all other European nations it is still sufficient. At home one is still in a position to get such relaxation as newspapers, theaters, concerts, visits to movies, radio—the relaxation which the population needs pressingly in consideration of the strain it bears during its process of work.

"Almost all this does not hold good for our soldiers on the Eastern Front. That cannot be changed. But in one thing the hinterland can help. It can give to its sons and fathers protection against the wrath of the wintry climate. As long as a single object of winter clothing remains in the fatherland, it must go to the front. I know that also in the homeland the individual can spare such equipment only with great difficulty. He is not in a position to replace it. But a thousand times more urgently do our soldiers need such equipment, which they cannot replace either.

"It would be an exaggeration if I talked of sacrifices at this time. What the homeland has suffered in the war are only inconveniences and little curtailments, compared to what our front soldiers have borne daily and hourly, over two years.

"Thanks to the actions of our front soldiers the homeland still enjoys an internally safe life. The front, for its part, must stake health and life almost in all of Europe. In Europe does our front stand guard for all of Europe and thereby, above all, for us.

"As our soldiers have suffered during the summer months continuously and without complaining of the heat, terrific summer downpours, subsequent dust or mud in their superhuman efforts on the march to victory, so do German soldiers now stand on the wintry defense positions in snow, ice, rain, sleet, frost and cold, as a safeguard of the homeland.

"Against heat, the front could hardly protect itself; against cold, only the entire homeland can help our front. Who at home would dare to withdraw his help from this service of unity?

"The front needs the following badly, and above all: over-shoes, if possible lined ones or fur-lined ones; warm woolen clothing, socks, stockings, heavy underwear, vests, or pullovers; warm, especially woolen underclothing, undershirts, chest and lung protectors; any kind of headgear protection, ear muffs, wristlets, ear protectors, woolen helmets; furs in all senses of the word, fur jackets and fur waistcoats, fur boots of every kind, and every size; blankets, especially fur covers, thick warm gloves, and especially fur-lined leather ones, or knitted gloves, and wool mittens; altogether everything of wool is needed urgently on the front and will be doubly welcome.

"Desired further are quilted or lined undervests, woolen shawls, neckerchiefs and scarfs; altogether everything that serves to keep up the battle against the winter cold, which has arrived so early this year.

"The Party, with all its auxiliary and allied organizations, has been instructed to be at disposal for collections of these items needed so badly right now at the front.

"The collection starts on Dec. 27 and ends on the eve of Jan. 4, 1942. Party members will make the collection from house to house or from apartment to apartment. Dear *Volks-genossen* (people's comrades) make it easier for those collectors while they are at their work."

This was how the German people learned that German soldiers were freezing to death on the Russian front.

That was by no means all. The whole communications system had broken down. The problem of supplies had from the first been one of the chief problems of the Russian war. With the tremendous battlefront stretching from Finland to Rumania this was natural. In the first three months of the war the three supply centers of Koenigsberg, Warsaw, and Bucharest had proved inadequate. Six new centers had hastily been established, and until the middle of October these functioned very well.

The situation did not become difficult until after the first reverse when the countless attacks of the Russians began to create pockets in the German front, breaking down the straight

German line. The supply problems this situation created could have been solved if Hitler had followed his generals' advice to retreat and establish a somewhat straighter front. But this was not done. The Russians soon realized that they would hamper the Germans and in some cases make their position too precarious to hold if they attacked supply lines primarily. This they did on a grand scale. On many parts of the front the incredible cold or the lack of trucks made horses indispensable for the maintenance of supplies. The Russians concentrated on the horses; thousands of them were slaughtered and the German supply system became more and more dislocated. By November the splendid German supply organization which had so impressed the Western Powers had fallen into chaos. The great supply centers had been broken up into hundreds of small supply centers and the task of serving these hundreds of centers on the one hand, and the distribution of supplies from these centers to the zigzag front on the other hand, became increasingly difficult and in some cases quite hopeless.

This disaster, however, was more or less the result of military events. Even the best and most foresighted organization could have done little to prevent it. But there occurred another disaster that had nothing to do with actual events at the front and that at first seemed altogether inexplicable.

This disaster was the lack of woolen clothes, furs, and sleds. The Germans had been completely unprepared for a winter campaign.

The economy of a country that has prepared for war for years, as Germany had, naturally works in closest co-operation with military needs. This must apply not only to planes and guns but to shoes and uniforms as well. As we have seen, for years the German General Staff had prepared for a campaign in Africa. And therefore they had sun-helmets, lightweight uniforms and refrigerators on hand. If they had been prepared for a war in Russia, they should have had winter clothing, furs, sleds, skis, etc. Since millions of men had to be equipped, such preparation naturally would have taken time.



Moreover, the General Staff had all the necessary practical experience from the last war and from the Russo-Finnish War. For desert warfare they had had no practical experience; they had to depend on the experiments of the laboratory in Tübingen.

Why, then, did they not have the necessary equipment for the Russian winter campaign?

The explanation that they had simply "forgotten" about it is grotesque. The German General Staff was not in the habit of forgetting such elementary matters. Sabotage, too, is impossible as an explanation. For it is unthinkable that anyone (and who could it be?) could have sabotaged such enormous preparations. For even with the German textile factories working at top speed on two twelve-hour shifts, it would have taken at least two years to supply all the necessary clothing.

The only explanation is that a winter campaign was not prepared for because they had not expected a winter campaign in Russia.

They had expected brief campaigns against Czechoslovakia and Poland and then, after a breathing spell of two years, against France and England. And they had counted on an agreement with Russia. When Hitler forced the war against Russia, it was to be an affair lasting three months—a campaign, then, that would not have lasted into the winter—even if additional topping up had been necessary later.

But even if the General Staff had given orders for such equipment the minute the Russian campaign began, German industry—even with the aid of the industry of the occupied countries—could not possibly have delivered the goods on time.

We may take it for granted that in the course of the generals' conference in the middle of October, the question of lack of winter equipment came up. There can be no doubt that these generals all knew from their experience what a winter in the field was like. Many of them still remembered from the last war what a winter in Russia was like.

Hitler did not know.

In the spring of 1942 Winston Churchill made a speech in which he poked fun at Hitler for not knowing this. He pointed out that while most people had learned in school of the terrors of the Russian winter, Hitler had obviously failed to learn about it because of his scanty education. Churchill undoubtedly intended his remarks ironically, as a psychological attack, and as such it no doubt struck home. But the strange part of it was that he spoke the literal truth. Hitler simply did not know what winter was like in Russia.

The result was that the German Propaganda Ministry was forced to ask the German people for woolen clothes for the freezing German soldiers.

Throughout the world, people wondered how a first-rate psychologist like Goebbels could make a speech that inevitably shook the people's confidence in its leaders—a confidence he had been building up for years.

It is unlikely that this extremely clever man had suddenly lost his reason. There are two explanations for the sensational speech in which he pleaded for woolen clothes. One reason is obvious: the Army had to have woolen clothes or it would freeze. The need was so desperate that even a genius at propaganda would not hush it up.

But there is a second explanation for the Propaganda Minister's speech. It has to do with the frame of mind of the German people.

Within Germany the people were apathetic.

Oh, yes, they had won victories. They had occupied almost the whole of Europe. The German Army was the best in the world, the German fliers were the best fliers in the world, the Fuehrer was the greatest man in the world—perhaps the great man of all time.

But what did all the victories mean to the masses of the German people? They read about them every day in the newspapers—at least until December, 1941. They saw them in newsreels. The newsreels showed tanks rolling over fields and meadows, machine guns firing, bomber squadrons climbing into the air.

They showed troops invading strange lands and strange cities. For two years the Germans had seen this—week after week, month after month. They had got used to it. Victories were no longer anything unusual; they were no longer exciting; they aroused no enthusiasm. They had become part of the daily routine. The Germans no longer turned on their radios to hear about new victories.

What did these incessant victories mean? In the second half of World War I, the Berlin population used to murmur, "*Wir siegen uns tot*" (Our victories are killing us).

What did these incessant victories mean now, these eternal conquests of new countries? They meant as they did earlier, that fathers and sons, husbands and brothers still did not return home. In the beginning they had thought it would all be over by Christmas, 1939. But it was still not over. The people began to ask whether their fathers and sons and brothers and husbands would ever return home.

To be sure, whenever they conquered a new country, the soldiers sent packages home containing food, stockings, shoes, and clothes. And they wrote enthusiastic letters to the people back home, not about the new victory, but about the country, the city where they were staying, the new things they saw, ate, and bought.

It was strange that in these countries there was always more to eat and more to buy than in Germany itself. The Germans had always been told that these countries were badly governed and decadent. But the things the soldiers sent home were goods that for years had not been obtainable in Germany.

Consequently, the mood that slowly developed in Germany was just the opposite from the mood that generally prevails in a country whose soldiers are fighting and winning in foreign lands. Between 1914 and 1918, for example, the soldiers at the front had been pitied. People at home had worried about the danger their men were in; they had prayed for the soldiers and were either egotistically pleased or else ashamed because they were so much better off at home. But now people began

to feel that it was better to be "at the front" than at home. Gradually the idea developed that the ninety per cent who were not part of the Army were doing nothing but slave for the ten per cent who constituted the Army. That they ate little and wore no decent clothes so that the Army could have better food and better clothing. Most of the Germans forgot that after all the men in the Army were daily risking their lives. This was a psychological result of the blitzkrieg, of the easy victories. And it was a result that Dr. Goebbels had probably not expected.

But he recognized the dangers inherent in this attitude. There is little doubt that he intended his plea for woolen clothes to be hysterical. He wanted to stamp out the growing suspicion that the Army was better off than the rest of the country. By showing how the troops in Russia were suffering, he wanted to destroy the general discontent and indifference. This is indicated in other things besides his first plea for woollens. The whole tenor of the German press had not been permitted to print anything but idyllic descriptions of the life of the German soldier. Now it suddenly indulged in realistic and brutal descriptions of the soldiers' trials. An effort was made to recreate in the public the attitude of 1914. And, quite openly, to make the generals a little more unpopular. For the man in the street could not help thinking that if things were going wrong on the Russian front the generals were responsible. By this time, it is true, Hitler had taken personal command. But that merely meant that the Fuehrer was endeavoring to save the situation.

Dr. Goebbels' experiment failed.

The terrible stories of the sufferings of the German troops frightened the people, but did not awaken them out of their apathy. The Nazi propaganda machine had hammered away too long at the German people. The time was past when any news, no matter what its nature, could make much impression. The things that impressed the Germans were what they personally experienced. And what were their personal experiences? That they ate poorly. That there was nothing to buy. That they had little coal and that they were cold.

And then the first cripples appeared in the streets of German cities, the first soldiers without legs and arms. And the first women in mourning appeared in the streets, with their black dresses and black veils. At first, an attempt had been made to forbid women to wear mourning. But when the deaths on the Russian front mounted into the hundreds of thousands, such a ban was no longer possible. It even proved impossible to keep death notices, in the form of heart-breaking little ads, out of the papers.

The apathy remained. The war? The victories? The German people felt more and more that they had nothing to do with these things. The war was the Army's business. They had always been told that the war could not be lost. Well, let the Army go ahead and win it. Those who had lost their dear ones not only felt sorrow; they felt that they had been treated unjustly. Why was this happening to them? What did they have to do with this whole business?

A thousand rumors circulated in Germany. A thousand stories were told about the Fuehrer, the men around the Fuehrer, the generals. Who was in disgrace, who was arrested, who had been shot? The stories were told, but the people who recounted them spoke as though these stories were no concern of theirs. The apathy remained.

And then came fear. It was an obscure, inexplicable fear; a kind of general fear of the future. Where would all this end, what would come of it? the people asked. When would it end? Would it ever end?

Hitler in his speech of April 26 before the Reichstag at least indicated that there would be a second winter in Russia when he said, "Next winter, wherever we may be, the Army in the east will be better armed and equipped. Never again will the soldiers have to live under the conditions through which we have passed."

Goering, in his capacity as wartime economic commissioner, delivered on May 20 an address in which he left no doubt that this second winter had to be faced. Announcing "temporary

reductions in food rations," he said, "Nature really has treated us very unkindly. Last year we hoped for record crops. Then rains came and the harvest was reduced. Now, however, much as we enjoy the warm sun, we long for rainfall to bring what the farm needs...."

Then Goering spoke of the terrible Russian winter just over at the time he delivered his speech. He declared: "We must stick this war out, no matter how long it lasts."

This could mean only that even at that time a second Russian winter was already a certainty. The reduction of rations could have no other meaning. For if there was to be peace in the summer of 1942, what need of preparations for later on?

The reports on Goering's speech tell how he waited in vain for outbursts of applause. The audience he addressed remained silent. The apathy ruined the whole effect. But the fear, the generalized fear of the future, grew in the people.

Goebbels knew of that fear. He believed that if he brought it out into the open he could destroy it. He tried bringing it out into the open.

In some of his cleverly written articles he told the Germans with complete frankness that they had to win this war, or they were doomed. He spoke of an inferno unexampled in history that would descend upon Germany if the war was not won. He made it clear that the peoples whose countries the Germans had invaded would take their revenge. That they would drown Germany in blood. He warned. He brought the fear out into the open, but this did not diminish it; it did not disappear. Instead, it grew. It seized the minds of all. All the Germans became obsessed by the dread that all their victories would not help, that even the greatest victory was pointless—because the day of reckoning would come.

And so all promises of great, decisive summer offensives met with a stone wall of indifference in Germany.

The apathy had won.

PART VII

*THE EVE*

*If my soldiers were to begin to think, not  
one of them would remain in the ranks.*

—FREDERICK THE GREAT





## I

**T**HE GENERALS sat in their headquarters at the Russian front. The generals had their respective headquarters somewhere at the front, and they performed their duties as commanders in the old, traditional manner of the generals; without excitement or sentimentality or hysteria.

They lived in a castle or in a big villa or even in a requisitioned school building. They rose at six o'clock; breakfasted—very well—with their officers at seven; listened to the reports of their Chiefs of Staff, which generally lasted an hour or two; and then made their decisions, usually the decisions their Chiefs of Staff suggested. Sometimes they interrupted with a precise question, but not often. All was wholly traditional. Then they went walking or riding; had lunch; then slept for half an hour. Most generals did this—they were no longer young. In the afternoon they inspected shelters or kitchens or positions; then came a second, shorter discussion with their Chiefs of Staff. After that the big evening meal, in which some thirty officers took part. Then jokes were told, bridge played, and then to bed.

All this seemed wholly unlike war, wholly unheroic. And this was precisely what the Prussian tradition called for. Generals must live peaceful and orderly lives; they must preserve their equanimity; they must stand apart from the events at the front; they must not become nervous, so that their decisions would be hampered by emotions. The generals did not freeze or go hungry or fall ill. But nevertheless they raged at the cold. And they were furious that there were no furs and no woollens and no alcohol and no sleds or skis for their soldiers.

The generals were not tender-hearted. War was war. In war

there was shooting, and where there was shooting men were wounded and killed. Being wounded or killed was part of the soldier's profession in time of war. But it was not part of a soldier's profession to be senselessly exposed to an impossible cold; senselessly because the organization broke down; because the Fuehrer—probably by this time they again referred to him as the Bohemian Corporal—had forced the Army into this impossible predicament.

After all, it was their men who were dying. If their soldiers were asked to march and fight and risk their lives, then they had a right to expect of their generals that they would be well sheltered, well fed, and well supplied with weapons—not that they would be abandoned to the cold without the barest necessities, without even weapons that would work in the numbing cold.

The soldiers suffered terribly. None of them had ever experienced such cold. Few of them had even known that such cold was possible.

They wore several shirts and woolen sweaters on top of each other—if the Goebbels' Winter Aid could supply these. They wore fur jackets that had been collected at home and sent to the front. But these things helped little. It was so cold that they burned themselves when they touched the barrels of their rifles. It was so cold that all the food that did come through had to be thawed for hours over fires before it could be eaten. It was so cold that the oil in the tanks and trucks froze solid. The soldiers avoided going out of their shelters alone for even a moment, for then they became so tired that they would sit down for a moment, fall asleep, and never wake up. Frozen hands, arms, legs, ears, noses—these were so common that they were not even talked about any longer. Perhaps they were glad when such things happened. At least it meant that they could go to base hospitals and escape this icy hell. Rather a few frozen limbs than a frozen grave.

Yes, this was war. And they had never imagined war would be like this. They had never thought of this when they listened

to the Fuehrer's speeches. And in the beginning war had not been this way. As they leaned over the little kerosene stoves waiting for the frozen beer to thaw they must have thought of the invasion of France, of the French wine cellars; of the food in Holland and Norway; of the swimming in the Bay of Biscay. They had not imagined war could be like this. For here in Russia there was only mud, filth, dirt, lice, and appalling cold. When was the last time they had lain in a real bed, in a clean bed, in a warm bed? Was it in Holland or in Norway or in France? It was an eternity since that time.

And it grew colder and colder; the snow fell and the tanks and artillery broke down; supplies stopped and the Russians were everywhere. Again and again the Russians broke through; they never let you alone, they never let you catch a few hours' sleep.

This was how the German soldiers on the Russian front lived and felt and thought. They were badly off, and they could no longer feel enthusiastic about the war. Still they did not throw away their weapons and desert to the Russians or turn back home.

Why did they not desert? Why didn't they give up?

That had nothing to do with Hitler. It had to do with the war. And the kind of men they were.

For they were German soldiers. Perhaps they had been something else once before. But now they were just soldiers. And that meant—what did it really mean?

It meant, above all, that they were no longer Herr Mueller and Herr Schmidt, that they were no longer a carpenter and a mail carrier, that they were no longer inhabitants of this town or that village, that they no longer had wives, mothers, or children. Not just now at any rate.

It meant, too, that they were not alone. There were other soldiers all around them. Perhaps only a few comrades crouching in this farmyard where they hoped to spend the winter. But that did not matter; more were not necessary. After all, they had always been in groups of only a few men. A squad had eighty men. And there was the second lieutenant or the lieu-

tenant who was in command of the squad. Three squads made a company; the captain commanded the company. Naturally you didn't know all the two hundred and forty men in the company. But you knew the captain and you belonged to the company. And four companies made a battalion and the major commanded the battalion. And three battalions made a regiment. And three regiments formed a division. And that was "your" division. The colonel who commanded the regiment was "your" colonel, and the major general who commanded the division was "your" major general. And two divisions made an army corps, "your" army corps.

Had you ever learned this? Yes, of course. You had learned it during your period of instruction, but it was not important that you had learned it. It was important that it had entered into your consciousness. It was part of you; it made you one of a great unit. It took extraordinary courage and resolution to break out of that unit.

An army corps—an army—these were things you only talked about. You never saw them, but you knew you belonged to them. You knew it when you were drilled in the barrack yard, when you polished your rifle, when you peeled potatoes or lay in the trenches and listened to the shells from the other side whistling above your head.

And that was what held you. That was what made it so hard to desert. For deserting meant breaking out of the great unit to which you belonged. Deserting meant thinking. Thinking was harder than not thinking. Perhaps the best thing to do was to think of nothing.

Perhaps this not-thinking was what they called discipline.

On March 31, 1925, there was an accident during the maneuvers of the Reichswehr. Troops were crossing the Weser near Veltheim. The pontoons were torn away by the current and eighty-one soldiers fell into the water. They drowned. When their bodies were recovered, it was found that they were all clenching their rifles tightly. Otherwise they could have saved themselves. But they had not released their rifles because they

had learned on the drilling ground: "The soldier should rather sacrifice his life than lose the weapon that has been entrusted to him."

The soldiers in Russia who froze to death and did not desert were the comrades of those eighty-one drowned soldiers.

Discipline? No. It was only that they no longer thought. They wore a uniform, those around them wore uniforms, and that meant they no longer considered what was the use of it all. They wore a uniform and those around them wore uniforms, and that meant they simply could not desert and leave their comrades in the lurch. All their comrades. Not only the few they saw, but the millions they did not know.

It would have taken more courage than they possessed to desert. It would have taken courage to break loose from the tremendous machine in which you were a cog and once more become yourself.

Perhaps—no, surely—this held more true for a German soldier than for any other soldier, because the German had always been less used to acting according to his conviction, his conscience, or his private desire than according to what his superior told him to do. If proof were needed, one can find it in the astonishing fact that, of all the languages, only the German language provides a special word for such a courage, which means just plain courage in any other language. The Germans call it *Zivilcourage* (civil, as contrary to military, courage).

A few German soldiers had this courage. A few did think. A few did desert.

## 2

When victories are won, people cheer. When victories are won, people are proud to belong, to be in on the victory.

Up to the winter of 1941, the German Army had won victories almost without interruption. And even during that terrible winter the German soldiers had penetrated deep into the enemy's country. To the average soldier this meant that they were still winning. It became very cold, and they endured

and suffered much before they began to suspect that perhaps they were no longer winning. Perhaps the slow dawning of this idea was also the beginning of thought. And perhaps these thoughts gave them the courage to break free. For in the winter of 1941-42 German soldiers began deserting to the Russians.

The German High Command did what it could to avoid this. The soldiers were told that the Russians shot their prisoners; that the Russians let their prisoners freeze and starve to death. A special propaganda bureau on the Western Front prepared leaflets and pamphlets for the soldiers. These brochures attempted to answer the most important questions the soldiers were beginning to ask.

Never before had the High Command had to fight so hard for its control over the minds of its own soldiers. True, there had been propaganda at the front during World War I, too. But it was not such a fight. It was the first confession of a corrosive weakness. The generals who were compelled to take such a repulsive and humiliating course of action knew that it was not their own weakness. It was a confession of the weakness of the Fuehrer.

The SS went a step further. Afraid that the terribly wounded and crippled soldiers would stir up a wave of horror within Germany, and that this wave would sweep on to the front itself, the SS decided to perform "mercy killings" on the wounded—on a tremendous scale. Whole trainloads of wounded from the Eastern Front were shipped to the Balkans and to France. Here, in specially prepared hospitals, they were given poison by injection or in the form of sleeping tablets. A few generals, led by von Kleist, voiced outraged protests. They received only promises that this sort of thing would not be repeated in the future.

Nevertheless, two million dead or severely wounded could not be concealed forever. Neither at the front nor in Germany nor its occupied territories. It could not be concealed if only for the reason that new soldiers were constantly needed for the Eastern Front merely to get through the winter; still more

were needed for the coming summer offensive. These boys of seventeen and eighteen years who had been called up shortly after Hitler had taken the command could be trained for only two months and then were sent to the front. The generals who objected to receiving such badly trained troops were bluntly informed that the young soldiers could complete their training at the front.

Incidents of all kinds increased. At German railroad stations women demonstrated against the departure of troop trains for the Eastern Front. Soldiers on leave from Russia refused to return to the front. There were frequent arrests, court martials, and executions. Troops stationed in Belgium who were to be sent to Russia actively refused. In Liège and Tournai there were street battles between these soldiers and the military police.

Similar incidents were reported from various Balkan countries, where the German authorities tried to withdraw troops for use at the Russian front. Cases of self-mutilation occurred.

In the spring of 1942 such cases were still the exception.

### 3

According to a newspaper story with a Stockholm date line, Adolf Hitler had sworn an oath in February, 1942, that he would not again set foot upon German soil until the Russian Army was completely annihilated. It may have been just a story. If it was not, Hitler broke that oath just as he has broken so many others, after only a few days. But he spent his fifty-third birthday, April 20, again in his headquarters.

It was a simple birthday celebration, in keeping with the circumstances, and on Hitler's request the guests brought no gifts. Among others, Generals Keitel, Halder, and Goering were present, as well as Admiral Raeder and Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. Goering had issued a proclamation to the German people. Flags were flown all over Germany.

Hitler's headquarters since that 1st of September in 1939 when he had put on his soldier's uniform and, to the disgust

of his generals, appeared at the Polish front, was a railroad train.

It was, however, not at all like an ordinary railroad train. It was an armored train consisting of twelve cars. This special train had been given to Hitler on his fiftieth birthday by the representatives of German Heavy Industry.

The train was painted green so that it would be difficult to see from the air. Moreover it was armed with eight of the most modern anti-aircraft guns. One never knew. It was also air-conditioned and fitted out with extraordinary luxury.

One of the cars was reserved exclusively for maps. General Staff maps, of course. Hitler spent hours every day poring over them. Another car was reserved for conferences—conferences of the General Staff or of Hitler's own Staff. A third car was Hitler's bedroom; here, too, his adjutant and sometimes General Joseph Dietrich of the SS (whom we have mentioned before) slept. Then there was the dining car and two other cars where Hitler's bodyguard were quartered.

The other cars contained offices and also served as the living quarters of the various officials.

Whenever Hitler's headquarters moved, every possible precaution was taken. A single locomotive rode ahead to search the right of way for unexploded bombs or infernal machines. A train that outwardly looked exactly like Hitler's train was sent off in an entirely different direction. Moreover, an army group at a different sector of the front was informed that Hitler was coming.

When Hitler's train reached its goal, the area for about a square mile around was fenced in and tents were set up in this area for a number of bureaus that had no room in the train. Moreover, a wireless station was immediately set up and a teletype system hooked into it. A printing press was also set up. Within a few hours a small town had been erected around the train. Even an airport was improvised in the immediate vicinity, since the Fuehrer wished to have his "command squadron" always in the neighborhood of his train. The train was guarded



day and night by SS men. Attempts at assassination were further hampered by the fact that none of the cars had steps leading down to the ground, as in other European cars, so no one could spring aboard while the train was in motion. The windows were, of course, of bullet-proof glass; moreover, they were usually covered with steel blinds. In addition, no one who was not a member of the entourage or whom Hitler did not wish to see was allowed near the train. This was not done only from fear of assassination; Hitler did not want too many tales circulating in Germany about the luxury in which the Fuehrer lived. Especially at a time when the army he led was suffering the terrible cold of the Russian winter.

This was the place where Hitler spent his fifty-third birthday. Here, too, he had spent his fifty-second birthday. At that time the train had stood near Subotica in southern Hungary. Then there had been more of a celebration: military music, an international broadcast, flowers, champagne (for the guests). At that time no unpleasant news from the front had troubled Hitler's good humor. The Yugoslav Army had just collapsed; the Greek Army was on the point of collapsing.

At that time Rudolf Hess had proposed the toast: "God protect our Fuehrer."

A year later Rudolf Hess was not there to congratulate him. Instead there were innumerable members of the SS who never seemed to leave Hitler's headquarters any more. To name only a few, there were SS *Sturmabannfuehrer* Guenther d'Alquin; *Obersturmfuehrer* Heinz Lorenz; SS *Standartenfuehrer* Rattenhuber; *Hauptsturmfuehrer* Schedle; SS *Obersturmbannfuehrer* Wuensche; SS *Sturmabannfuehrer* Wernicke. And, of course, Heinrich Himmler. And SA *Obergruppenfuehrer* Brueckner and SS *Gruppenfuehrer* Schnaub, Hitler's adjutants; and *Sturmabannfuehrer* Kempa, Hitler's chauffeur.

Indeed, when we consider all these names we might also think that not the Fuehrer but some important prisoner was being held in this train. Perhaps it came to virtually the same thing.

Field Marshal Keitel was away a good deal these days—he was traveling through Europe, as we have seen. General Jodl, however, did not leave the Fuehrer alone for a moment. This was at Hitler's express wish. Hitler clung to him, Hitler needed him. Jodl was not a man to endanger his position by contradicting Hitler or even expressing doubt about any of the Fuehrer's ideas. Jodl was the ideal yes-man.

Was it Jodl who first suggested to Hitler that the Fuehrer was very like Napoleon I? Or was it, as one would like to think, von Wietersheim who, before his relations with the Fuehrer had become too strained, talked with Hitler about Napoleon and thus urged some very interesting reflections?

In any case, it was inevitable that Hitler should become interested in Napoleon. Napoleon and Hitler, both had conquered the European continent. Napoleon and Hitler, both had marched against Russia. It was probably also the urge for self-justification that made Hitler compare himself to Napoleon. For, while the French emperor was already defeated and on his way out only a few months after he had started his Russian campaign, Hitler could tell himself that he was still there, that his record therefore was better than that of Napoleon.

Hitler began to speak quite frequently of Napoleon. On February 20, 1942, he mentioned him for the first time in a public speech—for the first time making comparisons.

The generals hardly encouraged such comparisons which, naturally enough, they must have found dangerous. Months before Hitler mentioned Napoleon publicly, an Army spokesman had declared:

"Napoleon's disaster in Russia was due to the fact that he did not stop his campaign at the beginning of the winter in order to finish it in spring under safe conditions. Napoleon the General could have stopped and continued the campaign when the winter was over. In that case he would have beaten Russia. But Napoleon the General was superseded by Napoleon the Emperor and Politician. While his Grand Army was in Russia the English made a landing in the Low Countries and many of

the conquered nations rose up in revolt. At the same time, Napoleon's position in his own country made a quick success necessary. His striving for a quick victory was the cause of his downfall. For that reason any comparison between Napoleon and Hitler is nonsensical."

But such a comparison was not at all nonsensical.

In April, 1942, in his grand accounting on the Russian war to the Reichstag, Hitler declared:

"A winter was beginning to settle over the East such as has not been seen even in this part of Europe for over a hundred and forty years. Four weeks earlier than foreseen all operations came to a sudden stop."

Napoleon had declared: "It is the winter that has been our undoing. We are the victims of the climate. If I had only set out a fortnight sooner..."

Hitler said: "We all know that regarding the reorganization of the Continent England promised a political doctrine that aimed at splitting the Continent for the welfare of the British Empire."

Napoleon had said: "The people of Europe are blind to their real natures. They see nothing but my armies, as though the English were not threatening them far more."

Indeed, there were hundreds of parallels between Napoleon and Hitler. Only in one point were they completely at variance. Napoleon understood that the attack on Russia was "a Herculean task, and I tried it stupidly. That I must admit." And, "I made a mistake in attacking Russia."

Hitler had not yet realized this.

#### 4

If Hitler thought about Napoleon as he studied him, then he must also have considered that Napoleon won victory upon victory, that he failed only once, and that this once was enough to bring about his downfall. Napoleon, too, had conquered many nations and occupied their countries. And when he returned

from Russia with the ruins of his Grand Army, those nations had risen up against him. Was it possible to think of Napoleon without thinking of the tradition of Tauroggen and York von Wartenburg, the model for all Prussian officers who came after him?

Probably Hitler thought a good deal about Tauroggen during these days and no doubt he discussed the matter with Heinrich Himmler. For in the first half of May, 1942, there had started another purge, though he stopped it almost immediately. General Halder was dismissed for some ten days, then recalled. A little later von Brauchitsch was reported arrested. But before that, on April 26, Hitler had made a very significant speech before the Reichstag, a speech which, no doubt, had to do with his fear of a new Tauroggen.

He said:

"In all these historic successes I have had to intervene personally in only a few instances. Only in those cases where nerves snapped, discipline broke down, or a sense of duty was lacking did I have to make hard decisions.

"It fills me with pride that the National Socialist training of our people is becoming more and more apparent. We have mastered the fate that broke another nation 130 years ago.

"The test of this winter should have taught us a lesson both at the front and in the homeland. From the point of view of organization we have taken every measure necessary to prevent a repetition of similar situations.

"Next winter, wherever we may be, the army in the East will be better armed and equipped. Never again will the soldiers have to live under the conditions through which we have passed. I am resolved to do everything so that our task shall be discharged.

"But I expect one thing, that the nation will give me the right to intervene and to take necessary action wherever the existence of our nation demands it.

"The front, the homeland, the transport system, the administration and judiciary must be governed by one single idea, to

achieve victory. No one can hope to insist upon his well-acquired rights.

"I therefore ask the German Reichstag for an explicit endorsement of my legal right to demand of everyone the discharge of his duties or to cashier him from his post or office if I consider that he has failed in his duty, regardless of who he may be or what acquired right he may have. I ask this because among millions of dutiful people there are only a few exceptions.

"Judges who do not recognize the commands of the hour will be removed from office. In this time there are no self-satisfied people with well-deserved privileges. We are all obedient servants to the common interests of the nation."

Neutral correspondents reported that even Goering, as President of the Reichstag, and the Nazi Party members of the Reichstag were surprised by Hitler's demand. But Goering did not hesitate to instruct the Reichstag to grant the Fuehrer his requested authority. All were in favor. If anyone objected, he certainly did not say so. And Goering did not bother to ask whether anyone objected.

Hitler's request that he be given what amounted more or less to the power of life and death over his people was certainly strange. For he long had this power—at any rate *de facto*, if not *de jure*. The fact that he demanded it once more, or rather demanded express confirmation of it once more, could have only two possible reasons.

One was that Hitler had already done something that presupposed this power. This would be quite in accord with his procedure. In many cases he had acted first and later asked for authority. This, for example, he had done after the blood purge of June 30, 1934.

If this was so, if Hitler had, say, removed men who were proving troublesome—and perhaps had done away with them—then the men in question must have been important people, or at least people with important connections. Otherwise Hitler

would scarcely have gone to the trouble of asking the Reichstag for special authority.

On the other hand, if he had not yet acted, then he intended to act. And again his intentions must have been directed at important people.

In both cases the new powers could hardly be directed at anyone except the generals.

Perhaps Hitler intended a sweeping purge in the near future. Perhaps he had already carried out such a purge, unknown to the public. Perhaps the special powers were meant only as a sword to suspend over the generals' heads, in order to keep them in line.

Whatever the case, from Hitler's point of view it was a desperate step.

True, he could now depose the generals or even have them killed and he would not even be acting illegally.

But what then?

Hitler must long ago have realized what the world was now beginning to suspect: that the many purges, insignificant as well as important, of the generals, their constant dismissals and recalls, their endless shifts from one field to another to which they were subjected—all these things could not be doing the German war effort any good. He must have realized that many partial defeats or setbacks might have been avoided if he had allowed his generals, even under his command, to work more peacefully and steadily, so that they could take the long view of their actions.

True, Hitler could kill off all his generals. True, with the support of his SS he could even risk a civil war against his generals. And probably would win such a war.

But something essential had changed. It was the same situation with which he had been confronted in March, 1938, when, during the invasion of Austria, he realized that he could not do without his generals. In the four years since then, he had become the master over his generals, but he still could not do

without them. He could not win the world war if he killed them off. He could not even go on waging this war.

## 5

New generals, of course, will be named. Old generals will be sent home, will be recalled, will be sent home again; may eventually be killed. Their fate during the next few months, maybe years, will to a large degree depend upon how the war shapes up for Hitler. But their ultimate fate is already decided, no matter how the war shapes up. No matter whether Hitler wins for a time or loses rapidly. For them, the battle of Russia long ago turned into the battle of the generals. And no matter what may happen in Russia, no matter what may happen in the world at large, they have lost this battle.

The German generals are doomed.

Even if the Germans should, for the purpose of this argument, win the war—

If they should win it, Hitler will have won. Then he would no longer need his generals. Then he and his gang would control the Army entirely.

Then he might have the generals murdered. Perhaps he might not even wait that long. Who knows? Maybe Hitler would appoint Heinrich Himmler to be Commander in Chief. Not only Commander in Chief in his civil war, but in his war against the world. For Hitler would always be able to depend on Himmler.

Anyhow, if the Germans should win this war, it would not be the generals who would march in triumph through the Brandenburger Tor. It would be Hitler, the Himmlers, the Dietrichs.

This must be a very unpleasant thought indeed for the German generals. For some of them it must be an even more distasteful thought than the idea of a lost war.

One can well imagine that they who helped the Bohemian Corporal to power now may be wondering whether it has been

worth while. Whether it had been a good idea to make him the Leader who now had all of them in his power so that they could no longer escape him.

They had been so sure they could handle him and control him. They had been so sure that they had given him leeway, much too much of it. They had not wanted to march into the Rhineland, but Hitler had promised them that nothing would happen. Had he not been able to keep his promise, Hitler would have been through. But he did keep it. Hitler had promised them that the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Poland, France would be accomplished in blitz fashion. They had been afraid of a long war. Hitler had kept his promise. So they had believed him when he promised that Russia, too, would be conquered in short order. But this time he had not been able to keep his promise.

It was ironic. All those blitzkriegs had not really been necessary. That is, if the campaigns against Poland or against the West had taken a few weeks longer, nothing disastrous would have happened. Only one time was the blitzkrieg a necessity—in Russia—and in this one case it did not work.

Such was the situation by the middle of May. It was, of course, clear that Hitler would have to wage another offensive against Russia in order to regain the initiative lost during the winter. Or, as the popular version had it, to liquidate the last continental front before the ever-growing means of the Allies were mobilized and sent to the European continent.

If the strategic goal had been the same as a year before—that is, the destruction of the Red Army—then the attempt of the year before would have had to be repeated: a break through the center, the conquest of Moscow. Hitler could, for instance, have waged a concentrated attack against Moscow from Rzhev and Orel. The experiences of 1941, however, had proved that such an enterprise would cost too much. Even if a success, it could not have been followed up. Experience also indicated that the Red Army would—as in the year before—retire in good order and by no means disintegrate. Thus the German front



would have been advanced for about a hundred miles—if everything went well.

That would have been too little a gain at too high a price for Hitler and even more so for his generals. Especially von Bock is said to have declared bluntly that Germany wasn't strong enough any more for such an offensive.

Therefore the Germans reverted to the plan that the generals had proposed on October 15, when, in their minds, the first plan had already failed. The new plan—like the old one—was to reach the Staraja Rusa-Rzhev-Kaluga-Tula line. Thus many dangerous "pockets" could be eliminated which endangered German communications to the south. Then the right flank could be moved forward to Voronezh. Only then was it possible to press toward Stalingrad. (If the Germans had pushed toward Stalingrad and taken it immediately the Red Army would have been deprived of the Volga as a means of communication; the oil fields of Maikop, Grozni and Baku could have been taken; but the German line of communication—Kharkov-Stalingrad—would have been endangered steadily from Voronezh.)

The plan finally agreed upon was something of a compromise between Hitler, Jodl, and Halder on the one side (they evidently just wanted to take Stalingrad and the Caucasus) and the orthodox generals on the other, who were afraid that the left flank of the advancing Army would be endangered.

In the second week of May, that is, before the Germans had started their long-expected offensive, Marshal Timoshenko began his offensive against Kharkov. But it was not a full-dress affair. Von Bock reacted well. He attacked Timoshenko's southern wing from the Dniepropetrovsk-Stalino sector. He succeeded in cutting off a part of the Reds. But Timoshenko had attained his strategic goal: he had forced von Bock to use his reserves, he had disturbed von Bock's deployment, and thus had forced the German general to defer his attack against Stalingrad for about seven weeks: an enormous advantage, given the shortness of the Russian summer.

Then the initiative once more went to the Germans. While the fight round Kharkov still continued, the Nazis took Kerch (between the Crimea and the Causasus). During June they stormed against and finally took Sevastopol: a measure of defense, since the Crimea was a threat to the right flank of von Bock; a measure of offense since its occupation meant that the Russian Navy in the Black Sea was without a base.

Only by the end of June, when it was a matter of days to the fall of Sevastopol, could von Bock start his offensive from the Orel-Kursk-Kharkov-Stalino-Taganrog line. The first week had few results. In the second week the Germans came up to the neighborhood of Voronezh. The third week brought five battles for the passage of the Don, and an unsuccessful attack on Voronezh. During the fourth week Rostov fell, and von Bock's men drove deep into the Don elbow, in the direction of Stalingrad. Again a frustrated storm on Voronezh. During the fifth week the Germans forced the passage of the Don to the south, and a column started to drive from Rostov on the southern bank of the Don to Stalingrad. A second column drove from Kharkov to the east in the direction of Stalingrad, while motorized divisions under von Kleist progressed a hundred miles south into the Caucasus. New, fruitless attacks were made on Voronezh.

The sixth week brought a strengthening of Russian resistance. Stalin personally had taken over the defense of Stalingrad. Neither of the two German columns which respectively had approached Stalingrad up to 80 and 120 miles could make further advances. The Russians organized counterattacks from Voronezh; the Germans on the northern side of the Don were repulsed.

During the following weeks only von Kleist could make any progress. The situation around Stalingrad and Voronezh did not change, at least not in favor of the Germans. By that time it was evident that it had been a mistake for the Germans not to have thrown the full weight of their forces against Voronezh. In spite of the spectacular successes, in spite of the enormous

advances of von Kleist in the Caucasus, this must have been clear to the man who was in charge of the entire operations. General von Bock must have known that again the blitzkrieg against Russia, the second and last possible blitzkrieg, had not worked.

And thus all reasonable hopes on the part of the German generals of winning this war, even in the long run, had really to be abandoned. No, neither they nor Hitler, nor the Himmlers and the Dietrichs, would march through the Brandenburger Tor in triumph.

But then, if this war should be lost, it would not be their responsibility. They had not wanted this war. Only Hitler had wanted it.

Responsibility. Couldn't they do again what they had done in 1918? Couldn't they throw the entire responsibility on the shoulders of someone else and escape safely from the debacle? Surely, if the German generals considered such possibilities, they did not think of their own safety or their own lives. They were old men. But more than their own lives was at stake. The reputation of the caste was at stake, the confidence of the people in that caste.

But if the German generals are considering such an escape, they must know deep down in their hearts that it is no longer possible. No matter how reactionary they are, no matter how wrong are the ideas of those isolated East Elbians about what goes on in other people's minds, they must have realized that the Germans will not fall for the same trick twice. They will ask the generals for an accounting. What had been possible in 1918 will not be possible in 1942 or 1943 or whenever the end comes. This time the Ludendorffs, the Fritschs and Seeckts, the Hindenburgs will not escape. There will be no chance for the generals to get out of it.

And if they were to start a revolt? Now? Today? Tomorrow?

There has been much talk lately about such a revolt on the part of the generals. A new Tauroggen of the German generals. Hitler is said to be so careful these days that he does not even

receive a general in conference until the officer has deposited outside his revolver or whatever weapon he happens to carry.

However, except for Hitler's fear, there has been little indication of any real attempt by the generals against the Fuehrer.

When Hitler asked and received the new powers which allowed him to do anything he pleased with anybody in Germany, only one general protested. Fedor von Bock protested. Perhaps he did this on his own responsibility. More probably, he acted as a representative for the others. Von Bock wrote a letter to Hitler in which he declared, with astounding frankness, that the new powers of the Fuehrer would considerably hamper Germany's war effort. The tone of the letter was worried. It was a warning rather than a threat.

The icy, haughty von Bock had courage. It took courage indeed to write such a letter to Hitler, in view of the events of the recent past. But then, Herr von Bock did not fear death.

He was legendary in the Army for his contempt of death. He was called among his comrades "*der grosse Sterber*" (the great dier) because he seized every opportunity to talk about what an honor it was to die for the Fatherland. He was the one general who daily proved that he had no concern for his own life—proved it even when it was unnecessary. Almost every day he went aloft in his own plane to reconnoiter the Russian front personally. Below him were thousands of tanks and guns, hundreds of thousands of fighting, dying men. Below him was the torn and plowed and scorched earth of Russia. Around him were planes: German planes protecting him, and Russian planes trying to shoot him down. He played at war as one plays chess. Preserving the lives of his soldiers did not interest him in the least. He spent them more ruthlessly than any of his comrades. He had no mercy on others because he had no mercy on himself.

Was this man capable of acting like York von Wartenburg, leading a revolt of the generals?

It would be interesting to know what went through the mind of General von Bock at such moments when he surveyed his

battlefront. It would be interesting to know what goes on in his mind today. He should have been in Moscow by November, 1941. He knows better than anybody else that even if he should succeed eventually in getting to Moscow—something highly improbable—it won't matter in the outcome of the war any more. The one, great opportunity has been missed.

The second opportunity—the one in the summer of 1942—which perhaps was not even an opportunity, has now been missed too. It matters little for the final outcome if Hitler makes farther progress in the Caucasus, even if he should try to pass the mountains there to get to the Near East—a dangerous and risky enterprise which must make his generals shudder and once more make them despair of his sanity. The main object, the destruction of the Red Army and thus the elimination of an entire front, so necessary, so desperately necessary for a German victory, has been frustrated.

Perhaps von Bock remembers how he and his comrades opposed this very war against the Russians. That Hitler and only Hitler wanted it. Perhaps he figures that the Russians must know this, too. Perhaps he sees there a possibility for a peace with Stalin—after the generals have got rid of Hitler.

We have no way of knowing what goes on in von Bock's mind. We know that he has courage, but there is every reason to doubt that he is a real leader. If he were, he would have acted already.

And of the generals, he is by far the best.

No, there is no York von Wartenburg today.

Therefore, there will be no Tauroggen. The generals of today are not what their fathers and grandfathers used to be. Some of them are good men. But they have no contact with the masses. Never, since Hitler came into power, have they been able to control the minds of even their soldiers. It is Hitler who has controlled these minds. The generals could not even achieve control over the minds of those soldiers who are openly opposed to the Nazis. And still less could they win over the indifferent ones who are neither for nor against Hitler.

The generals no longer have a Hindenburg. They have no authority with the masses. The masses have no confidence in them. Of course, the Nazi regime has done everything to promote just such a situation. Ever since the famous speech in which he begged for woolen things for the Army soldiers on the Russian front, Goebbels has never lost an opportunity to implicate the generals, as though they were to blame for the current catastrophe. Ever since Hitler personally took over the High Command on the Russian front, the names of the generals have scarcely been mentioned in the German press. With the exception of Rommel, whose popularity Goebbels has promoted with all the means at his command, a general's name hardly ever is printed—except on the occasion of his death.

But suppose, in spite of all this, that the generals should risk a revolution against Hitler and should succeed. Suppose they were able to do away with Hitler, in spite of all the odds against such an undertaking.

The revolution would sweep on, over von Bock, over von Rundstedt, over von Leeb. It would sweep away everything and everyone that had ever had anything to do with Hitler. Such a revolution would not stop where the revolution of 1918 stopped.

The German people are not very good at making revolutions. They are less used to acting according to their convictions, their conscience, their private desires than according to what their superiors tell them. Still, the German people by now have found out a thing or two. They have learned that the war did not really end in 1918 and that it was their generals just as much as Hitler who forced them to go on with the fighting. If these Germans ever acquire enough of that special courage, dictated by their conscience and their convictions, *Zivilcourage*, there is no telling where it all will end. But it certainly won't stop with the generals.

And this will mean the end of the generals. And this will mean the end of the caste.

True, the war is not over yet. Many things may happen.

But so far as the German generals and their fate and the fate of their caste are concerned, it does not really matter which side wins the next battles or even wins the war. The tragedy of the German generals, one may almost call it the divine comedy of the German generals, is at an end. The last lines are being spoken. The ringing down of the curtain is only a formality.

It all started when they called Hitler in to do their dirty work so that they could remain in the shadow. But once he was in, they could not control him. They could not get rid of him. They could not prevent him from dragging them into perilous situations and developments of which they wanted no part.

As a leader of a popular movement, Hitler had to destroy their caste and uproot them from the very soil on which they live.

As the ever-jealous, ever-fearful dictator, he had to kill them whenever they became too dangerous.

As a madman with ideas of world domination, he had to drag them into a world war and ruin them professionally.

The Russians have proved that a military caste is no longer necessary for waging a war. The Russian Army has proved that ideas can be stronger than traditions. The Russians have proved that the masses fight well when they fight their own battle. The irony of it is that by losing the blitzkrieg against Russia, the German generals have given the last conclusive proof that there is no longer any reason why they should exist.

The world of tomorrow certainly will not need them any more. Passing victories will hardly matter when we start building this world of tomorrow. It does not matter how far the German generals have progressed as these last lines are being written, or how far they may progress later on. In years to come, few people will remember which towns or even which countries the German generals took in August, 1942. They will, however, remember that in August, 1942, the Atlantic Charter was one year old—the Atlantic Charter promising peace and freedom to all nations.

In the world of tomorrow, peoples all over the world will

not want war. People will not feel threatened by other people. People will not need deployment plans, tanks, bombers. They will think of bread and work and freedom, and the pursuit of happiness.

The German generals are doomed because they will be anachronisms. In the world of tomorrow they don't belong.



## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 1918 *November* Armistice of World War I.
- 1919 *June* Treaty of Versailles.
- 1922 *April* Rapallo Treaty between Germany and Russia.
- 1923 *March* Kapp Putsch.
- October* Buckrucker Kuestrin Putsch.
- November* Hitler's Beer-Cellar Putsch.
- December* State of emergency in Germany.
- 1925 *April* Hindenburg becomes President of German Republic.
- 1926 *July* Von Seeckt leaves Reichswehr.
- 1929 Guderian begins to urge tanks. Meets British General Fuller. Becomes a Major in the Reichswehr.
- 1930 Ribbentrop's disarmament mission.
- 1931 *October* Hindenburg wins second election to Presidency, against Hitler.
- 1932 *July* Prussian Government deposed by Papen and General Rundstedt.
- 1933 *January* Hitler takes power.
- 1934 *June* First purge in Third Reich. Murders of Schleicher, Gregor Strasser, Roehm and many others.

- August* Hindenburg dies.
- 1935 *July* Rundstedt plans but does not carry out his putsch.
- 1935 *November* Reconstitution of German General Staff.
- 1936 *March* Rhineland remilitarized.
- November* Von Seeckt dies.
- 1937 *January* Britain and Italy sign Mediterranean agreement.
- May* President Roosevelt signs neutrality act.
- Neville Chamberlain succeeds Stanley Baldwin as British Prime Minister.
- June* Russian Marshal Tukhachevsky and seven other generals sentenced to be shot for treason.
- July* Japanese bombing planes attack Tientsin in first major attack of Japanese undeclared war on China.
- September* Hitler tells Nuremberg Nazi Congress: "Germany, Italy, and Japan are linked to save Europe from chaotic madness."
- November* Italy joins Germany and Japan in Anti-Comintern Pact.
- 1938 *January* General Blomberg's marriage.
- February* Blomberg and Fritsch dismissed.
- March* Nazi invasion of Austria.
- April* Court of honor, with Goering presiding, clears von Fritsch of accusations about his private life.
- June* Generals shuffled in England.

- September* Mussolini, Hitler, Chamberlain and Daladier at Munich.
- October* Occupation of Sudetenland.
- 1939 *March* Nazi occupation of Prague.  
Memel taken over by the Germans.  
Franco takes Madrid; end of the Spanish Civil War.
- April* Italy invades Albania.  
President Roosevelt asks Hitler and Mussolini to pledge ten years of peace and lists twenty-seven countries that they should promise not to attack.  
Hitler rejects Roosevelt's plea, denounces Anglo-German Naval Treaty and nonaggression pact with Poland.  
General Groener dies.
- May* Maxim Litvinov replaced by Vyacheslav Molotov as Soviet Foreign Commissar.
- August* Nazis occupy Danzig  
Hitler-Stalin Pact.
- September* Hitler invades Poland.  
Britain and France declare war on Germany.  
Polish Campaign, ending with the division of Poland between Germany and Russia.  
Von Fritsch dies.
- October* Hitler's peace offer.
- November* Beginning of Russo-Finnish war.
- 1940 *March* End of Russo-Finnish War.

- April* Germany invades Denmark and Norway.
- May* Germany invades Luxembourg, Holland, and Belgium.  
British evacuation at Dunkirk.
- June* End of Norwegian and British resistance in Norway.  
Italy declares war.  
German troops enter Paris.  
French delegation signs Armistice with Germany at Compiègne.  
Rumania cedes Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to Russia.
- July* Naval Battle of Oran.  
Luftwaffe launches air raids over England.
- September* Germany, Italy, and Japan sign a ten-year mutual assistance pact.
- October* Germany occupies Rumania.  
Italy invades Greece.
- December* British drive Italians out of Egypt; invade Libya.
- 1941 *March* Bulgaria joins Axis.  
President Roosevelt signs Lend-Lease bill.
- April* Military coup in Yugoslavia overthrows government, installs young King Peter II. Germany invades Yugoslavia and Greece.  
United States takes over protection of Greenland.  
Germans enter Athens.

- May* Haile Selassie returns to Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia, which British have wrested from Italians.
- President Roosevelt proclaims unlimited national emergency.
- British enter Iraq.
- June* British begin invasion of Syria.
- Germany invades Russia.
- July* United States occupies Iceland.
- London and Moscow sign mutual aid pact.
- August* President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill sign the Atlantic Charter.
- Iran agrees to co-operate with Britain and Russia.
- October* Hitler declares Russian resistance is broken.
- Hostages murdered by Nazis in France.
- Nazis capture Kharkov.
- November* United States extends one billion Lend-Lease aid to Soviet Union.
- Maxim Litvinov appointed Russian Ambassador to Washington.
- Timoshenko starts Russian counteroffensive.
- December* Japanese attack Pearl Harbor.
- Germany and Italy declare war on United States.
- United States declares war on Germany, Italy and Japan.

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- United States declares war on Germany, Italy and Japan.

Hitler takes high command of the German Army.

Goebbels appeals to German people to collect woolen clothes for the front.

Japanese occupy Hong Kong.

1942 *January*

Japanese occupy Manila.

Generals von Reichenau, Todt die.

*February*

Fall of Singapore.

*March*

Fall of Batavia.

*April*

Fall of Bataan.

Hitler, before the Reichstag, makes himself supreme judge over Germany.

*May*

Fall of Corregidor.

R.A.F. mass raids on Cologne, Rostock, Luebeck.

*June*

Fall of Tobruk.

Fall of Sevastopol.

Japanese land on Aleutians.

*July*

British stop Rommel in Africa.

German offensive in Southern Russia.

*August*

Beginning of Allied counteroffensive in Pacific.

German successes in Caucasus.

Churchill in Cairo and Moscow.

U.S.A. forces land on Solomon Islands.



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